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ABSTRACT

These conference proceedings include: (1) opening speeches; (2) "Must Language Teaching Be Communicative?" (Christopher Brumfit); (3) "Recipes for Tired Teachers" (Mario Rinvolucri); (4) "Facing the Challenge of New Technologies: Interactive Video and the AUTOTUTOR Project" (David Little, Eugene Davis); (5) a panel discussion of questions submitted by participants; (6) "Classroom Management through the Target Language" (Margaret Mohan); (7) "Developing Learner Autonomy through Materials" (Hertha Stieber); (8) "Implications of the Communicative Approach for the Role of the Teacher" (Joe Sheils); (9) "The Effects of the New Syllabuses on the Language Classroom" (Maura Clancy); (10) "New Approaches in the Development of Oral Skills" (Mary Ruane); (11) "Implementing Oral Exams as Part of the School Exam System" (Jacqueline Nelson); (12) "Frameworks for Listening" (Sean Ferrick); (13) "Frameworks for Reading" (Sean Devitt); (14) "Using Songs and Games in the Language Class" (Eleanor Moussoulides); (15) "Teaching Other Subjects through the Target Language" (Siobhan Supple); (16) "The Teaching of Literature" (Cormac O Cuilleanain); (17) "The Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching" (Brendan Quinn); and (18) reports from the language associations and concluding remarks. (MSE)

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New approaches in the language classroom : coping with change

Proceedings of the Second National Modern Languages Convention held at Trinity College Dublin 31 January and 1 February 1986

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Edited by
David Little
Bebhinn O Meadhra
David Singleton

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FOREWORD

The Second National Modern Languages Convention was organized jointly by the Modern Language Teachers' Association (MLTA) of Ireland and the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS), Trinity College, Dublin. It took place at Trinity College on 31 January and 1 February 1986, exactly four years after the First National Modern Languages Convention.

It is now widely recognized that the 1982 convention, whose theme was "Innovations in curricula and examinations at second level", did much to prepare the way for the subsequent changes in modern language syllabuses and examinations. The second convention, with its title "New approaches in the language classroom: coping with change", was conceived very much as a follow-up to the first, focusing - as the contents of this volume show - on the practical problems that arise in the language classroom as teachers and learners come to grips with more communicatively oriented programmes, materials and tests.

The MLTA, which was involved in the 1982 convention as just one of a number of participant organizations, has recently begun to see the promotion of such "umbrella" events as properly belonging to its area of responsibility. Accordingly, it was on the MLTA's initiative that arrangements for the 1986 convention were set in motion. Future conventions will be organized by the MLTA, either entirely under its own auspices or in conjunction with other bodies, every two years.

CLCS's role in both the 1982 and the 1986 convention was threefold. It acted as host; it undertook most of the local organization; and it provided an imprint for the convention proceedings.

The Second National Modern Languages Convention was supported by generous sponsorship from the Italian Cultural Institute, for which the organizers are extremely grateful. Further sponsorship was forthcoming from the Educational Company of Ireland, and this too we gratefully acknowledge.

David Little
Bebhinn O Meadhra
David Singleton

Dublin
March 1986

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OPENING SPEECHES

SPEECH OF WELCOME BY PROFESSOR EDA SAGARRA,
REGISTRAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE

In welcoming you on behalf of Trinity College, I would also like to thank on your behalf your co-hosts, Ms Bebhinn O Meadhra, President of the Modern Language Teachers' Association, and Mr David Little, Director of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, and their colleagues, for their work in organizing the Second National Modern Languages Convention.

Since my memory goes back longer than that of the majority of those present, I would like to place on record the sense of obligation which modern language teachers feel to the MLTA for its tenacious concern to promote the study of modern languages and in particular its determination to focus public attention on the oral component in language learning. There were many years, back in the 1970s, when even MLTA members felt themselves to be no more than a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Over the years the MLTA and the language teachers' associations have indeed made a significant contribution to helping to bring about a change in public awareness in Ireland as to the role of modern languages, and I am glad to be able to acknowledge it this evening, and to wish the new and vigorous committee well in its important work.

The Centre for Language and Communication Studies needs no introduction to the present audience, but I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to its work both within the university and in the national context. The most important activity among the manifold operations of the Centre is its research into linguistics and applied linguistics. With the right expertise and leadership, research enables the university to be a force for benign change in its national environment, and the Centre has made a signal contribution to Irish society in its research into the ways in which we learn and teach languages. Moreover, the discipline of modern languages at third level in Ireland enjoys a signal advantage not shared to the same degree in many other EEC states, and this is extremely close co-operation between second and third level teachers. This has been most evident in the research and teaching programmes of the Centre, but there are many other areas in our university where the same has been true, and all of them interact to some degree with the Centre. AUTHENTIK is a most obvious case in point, but the same can be said about the modern language departments here generally.

The Centre has been fortunate in being able to draw on the expertise of many distinguished international scholars. I would like to name one in particular, John Trim, Director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research in London. Since their inception in the early 1970s Mr Trim has been chief adviser to the Council of Europe's modern languages projects, which have had an incalculable influence on language teaching in many countries throughout Europe, not least in Ireland. As a

tribute to his achievements in this and other spheres, John Trim will receive an honorary degree from this university next July. Most of you will have read the reference to his work in one of the key discussion documents of the Curriculum and Examinations Board; I hope that some of you will be able to join in our celebration of his achievement next summer.

Trinity College has also been active in other ways in recent times to promote the learning of modern languages and thus promote the mobility and enhance the employment opportunities of young Irish people in the next decades. Through a series of bi-lateral university exchanges with France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and we hope, within the next year or two, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, and the People's Republic of China, we have been able to offer or are about to offer elementary courses in all these languages to our students and to members of the public. This year, for example, we have thirty students and members of the public learning Dutch and a somewhat smaller number learning Swedish. By making provision for self-taught courses - in German for example - the Centre is helping to prepare students in professional and vocational areas who may wish to to study at EEC universities under the Erasmus programme, and to ensure that there will be no linguistic obstacle to professional employment of Irish graduates in continental Europe.

In our work in the university in the area of modern languages, we have also drawn on the support of members of the public service, particularly (though not only) the inspectorate in the Department of Education. One of the busiest officials in Ireland just now, the Chief Executive of the Curriculum and Examinations Board, has kindly agreed to open this evening's proceedings, and I now invite Mr Ó Ceallaigh to address us.

OPENING ADDRESS BY ALBERT Ó CEALLAIGH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS BOARD

May I begin by thanking the Centre for Language and Communication Studies and the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Ireland for inviting me to give a short address to this, the Second National Modern Languages Convention. Occasions such as this are a welcome development and are becoming of increasing significance in the calendar of educational events. They provide a forum where teachers and those with an interest in Irish education can share their concerns, and pool their experiences and their expertise in support of the overall objective of developing and improving the service which the educational system has to offer to young people.

The theme of the convention, "New Approaches in the Language Classroom: Coping with Change", has a practical relevance for all teachers who face the challenge of a rapidly changing classroom situation. In meeting this challenge we are fortunate that we can draw on the experiences and expertise of supporting agencies such as the Centre for Language and Communication Studies in Trinity College.

The Curriculum and Examinations Board was established in 1984. The interim Board's terms of reference span first and second levels. They include a review of curricula and of modes of assessment at these levels. The interim Board does not have responsibility for the public examinations. The statutory Board, which the Minister has scheduled to come into place this year, will, however, have this responsibility.

In putting forward its thinking to date on a wide range of curriculum and assessment issues the Board has consulted widely. In its earlier publications, Issues and Structures in Education and Assessment and Certification, the Board dealt with the broader issues regarding curriculum and assessment. The Board's subsequent publications, which took the form of discussion papers, Language in the Curriculum and Primary Education, set out for discussion the initial thinking of the Board on issues such as the place of language across the curriculum and, of more immediate relevance to your deliberations, the position of modern languages at first and second levels. Both of these discussion papers reflect a development in Board thinking as compared with the views set out in the Board's first consultative document, Issues and Structures in Education. This development in Board thinking and the enhanced position for modern languages proposed by the Board in its recent discussion papers reflect in a real way the willingness of the Board to take the consultative process seriously and to be seen to respond to positions which are reasonably and cogently argued.

As the interim Board now prepares its final report to the Minister there are a number of issues of major educational significance which will require further attention. Many of these

become of increasing importance in the context of the Board's proposal to develop a unified system of assessment at the end of the junior cycle. In effect, this will mean that a new examination, to be called the Certificate of General Education, will replace the existing Intermediate and Group Certificate examinations. In addition to this we need to take into account the decisions of government as set out in the Ages of Learning document. The structural changes set out in that document confine the junior cycle to a three-year period and offer options over a three-year period at senior cycle level.

At primary level the Board has proposed for discussion the possibility of introducing the teaching of a modern European language into the school curriculum at that level. Educational, economic and cultural arguments have been advanced over the years in support of this proposal. The progressive example of our colleagues in European countries has been cited. However, before such a proposal could be accepted, issues such as - when in the primary cycle we might introduce modern languages; what form courses might take; whether they would have a cultural or a linguistic emphasis or both; what human and material resources such a development would require - need very serious consideration.

At second level the new unified system which it is proposed should replace the existing Intermediate and Group Certificate examinations does have implications. So too does the Board proposal which would allow all young people to receive some certification at the end of the period of compulsory education. Furthermore the Board has recognized the need for a variety of modes of assessment which would be congruent with the stated curriculum and assessment objectives of all courses.

In curriculum terms the Board has recognized the need for flexibility in the development of courses which would meet a variety of needs, aptitudes and abilities. This raises the issue of the number of levels within a unified system at which courses might be offered. At senior cycle the need for a diversity of provision seems obvious. This is further highlighted by the structural changes at that level and by the growing significance of education/training programmes such as the Vocational Preparation and Training courses now on offer on a very wide basis for 15 to 18-year-olds. What role, if any, is envisaged for modern languages within such courses, and what kind of flexibility and mobility can be encouraged between all of the options, including Leaving Certificate courses, which are now on offer in the senior cycle?

Over and above the question of what is taught in modern languages courses there is the crucial one of the role of the teacher and the need for teachers to develop a range of methodologies which are best suited to their individual strengths as teachers and which can be seen to be most effective in achieving the stated aims of the courses. Recent developments such as the communicative approach to language teaching are

already influencing the definition of language syllabuses in Ireland. They provide a greater flexibility for teachers in their approach to language teaching. The Board in its publications has recognized these developments and has dealt in some detail with the communicative approach to language teaching. Such developments further reinforce the need for support for teachers in the form of improved provision in their pre-service and in-service education which will enable them to perform efficiently and effectively as professional educators.

The Board is conscious of the importance of working towards a greater understanding of these issues and of devising a developmental strategy which will move us forward towards our targets on a planned and rational basis. In doing this in the area of modern languages the Board is awaiting the advice of its Board of Studies for Languages, whose main function is to devise an appropriate set of aims for the teaching of all languages at first and second levels. Such a set of aims would be an important step forward in co-ordinating the efforts of all those engaged in the teaching of langage from 4 to 18 and would promote the development of a more coherent language policy at school level. The work of the Board of Studies will also enable the Board to put in place its own structures for syllabus definition and development. This extension of Board structures follows from the decision of the Minister for Education in 1985 to transfer the advisory functions of syllabus committees to the Curriculum and Examinations Board. In the context of this decision I gladly recognize the major contribution made by the various subject associations, including the Modern Language Teachers' Association, to the work of syllabus committees to date. I am confident that the new Board structures will provide an even more fruitful vehicle for continuing to allow the many subject associations to make their experience and expertise available in the development of syllabuses and courses.

May I conclude by again complimenting all involved in organizing and supporting this excellent occasion. The variety and relevance of the topics for discussion and the range of expert speakers from Ireland and from other countries do indeed provide a very stimulating "recipe for tired teachers". It gives me great pleasure to declare the Second National Modern Languages Convention open.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Christopher Brumfit
University of Southampton

MUST LANGUAGE TEACHING BE COMMUNICATIVE?

Let us begin by considering the opinions of some learners.

'There would be a short passage of some six or seven lines of English. I remember one that began: "We are told that the Sultan Mahmoud by his perpetual wars abroad, and his tyranny at home, had filled the dominions of his forefathers with ruin and desolation and had unpeopled the Persian Empire." Underneath each word there would be its literal translation into French, thus: "Nous sommes dits que le sultan Mahmoud, par ses perpetuelles guerres au dehors ...." And finally there was the translation into good French: "On nous dit ...." Thus you had a clear idea of the relative construction of English phrases and French. It was a simple, but brilliant system. I was interested, and I learnt it all by heart in no time.' (Rambert 1972: 45)

'My method of learning Russian was so simple that I am surprised it is not generally used by people who need to learn a new language in a hurry. I had no compunction about pressing everybody I met into my teaching staff, and with good temper and much laughter everybody turned tutor. But that was not my real secret. I made friends with Russian children and, even more important, I bought and studied the Russian child's first reading books, the equivalents to "The cat ate the rat" and then, more advanced, "The blue cat ate the purple rat", and so on. Working through these simple readings, I promoted myself as it were a year each week, so that, starting as a child of five learning to read for the first time, I was, at the end of a month or so, a rather backward child of ten.' (Ransome 1976: 161)

'I also learnt German, mainly by reading works of history in German and looking up every word in the dictionary. I taught myself to write German Schrift so as to be able to read it later .... However I worked hard in other ways at perfecting my German. I found an English teacher from a local secondary school and spent many hours with her pronouncing vowels until they sounded truly German .... I also picked up broad Viennese from the grooms at the riding school.' (Taylor 1983: 90 and 92)

'Through my sister, who had come from the country, I managed to get four copies of the Bible in different languages. So I read the Gospels, verse by verse, with the help of the little knowledge of German and French that I had acquired in school, and side by side with this a parallel reading in English and Italian. In a few months, I made excellent progress in this way.'
(Trotsky 1929: 118)

Examples such as these could be repeated many times without any difficulty. Furthermore, the opinion of participants in more serious discussion will often support similar views. One con-

tributor to Pickett's survey of the practices of successful language learners writes: 'Method of learning: learn how the language is organised. The grammar, inflections, conjugations, declensions etc. etc.' (Pickett 1978: 61), and several other contributors repeat this theme. Methods of language learning, in fact, are as varied as the personalities of language learners, and many more peculiar means than these have been tried out. But of course language teaching is not the same as language learning, and most of the learners cited have been writing about private study. Most of us as teachers have to engage in a public and social activity, and our methodology has to take into account groups of learners, usually large groups whose members cannot have all their wishes or needs taken into account.

Nonetheless, there has been a consensus by methodologists in recent years, and it is always sensible to question conventional assumptions about what is and is not appropriate behaviour in education, for there is a constant temptation to allow 'coping strategies' to dictate methodology.

What is surprising about recent developments in communicative language teaching is that often the improvements demanded have seemed to go directly counter to 'coping strategies'; indeed they have often placed what appear to be impossible demands on the teacher. This may be related to a general trend, in which governments and the press appear to demand of teachers solutions to all the problems confronting society: in Britain teacher education courses are expected to deal with computers and health education, relations with industry and the integration of the handicapped, to name only a few themes, with no extra resources and no diminution of existing content!

But the communicative approach has asked us to adjust to the needs of particular groups of students, to base our syllabuses on vaguely-formulated theoretical categories like 'function', to make our classes more active, to use authentic rather than simplified materials, to care for each of our learners, to individualise, to make our classes noisier. And any teacher will add to this list from bitter personal experience.

At the same time, there are strong arguments from research and practical experience to support many of the changes. Yet in our search for the 'best' teaching we can manage, we need to avoid the effects of any bandwaggon. The arguments for being communicative should not lead us to neglect effective work within earlier traditions, and the illustrations quoted above make it clear that some learners at least are happy with procedures which are highly uncommunicative.

What these quoted accounts share is a sense of self-consciousness, often related to semi-conscious formulations about the nature of the target language. Marie Rambert talks about a 'clear idea of the relative construction of English phrases and French', and some kind of comparison underlies Trotsky's procedure also. This self-consciousness leads to commitment to hard

work which is reflected in Taylor's and Ransome's observations. To what extent do our current preoccupations in conventional methodology fail to allow for such commitment in our learners?

To explore this question I propose to discuss the social basis of recent changes in language teaching, before moving into the specific details of classroom practice. Language teaching is part of general education, and the major bases of its influence are as often social as linguistic or psychological.

Multilingualism in post-industrial society has often been viewed with some reserve, and especially in countries influenced by the British educational tradition. The elite tradition of the nineteenth century assumed that a knowledge of the languages of diplomacy, especially French, and of the classics was a necessary part of a satisfactory education. Governesses for girls, tutors and public schools for boys, ensured that language, among other attributes, separated the 'educated' from the rest. And 'language' here did not simply mean access to foreign languages, but also an accent (Daniel Jones bases his description of RP on 'everyday speech in the families of Southern English people who had been educated at the public schools' - Jones 1963: xv) and a dialect which the schools strove to preserve.

Meanwhile, throughout the country ordinary people, educated and uneducated, were variously multidialectal and multilingual as local circumstances dictated. Leith (1983, Chapter 6) summarises the cultural dominance of versions, and increasingly one version, of English over the indigenous languages, and discussion in the Swann Report (1985) and the Linguistic Minorities Project (1985) shows how similar patterns are developing in relation to more recent linguistic minorities. Languages in conflict are languages in contact, and varying degrees of multilingualism were more widespread, we may suspect, than a view based on the education system alone would allow.

But within education spoken communication was held to be generally unproblematic. Teaching was frequently heavily dependent on literacy - indeed on literature - in spite of the efforts of teachers associated with the Reform Movement (Howatt 1984: 169ff.). At various stages, middle class parents exposed their children to native-speaking tutors or governesses, or sent them for intensive and miserable (but effective) periods with overseas families. Some universities still interview prospective foreign language students in the target language, with the view that ability to converse should be acquired before starting the serious business of literary and cultural study. Nor is this pattern exclusively a British one: it is being repeated in many countries of the world as the EFL market expands, though recent innovations in methodology have had some impact.

The ability to converse in an appropriate foreign language may thus become a social marker as much as an educational one.

To some extent we may see recent developments in language

teaching methodology as reactions against this situation as much as psychological shifts in our views of the nature of language acquisition. There was a justification for the literary bias and the intellectualism of much foreign language teaching, once the premises were accepted. If education is primarily about identifying the very able, and providing them with the tools for self- and national development, then perhaps literacy can be taken for granted in the national language, and even perhaps the capacity to acquire a basic communicative competence in speech. Language teaching thus becomes a matter of adding the full comprehension necessary to be fully immersed in the target culture. Anyway, language learners need not necessarily expect a very close relationship with speakers of the languages they learn. (A model drawn from the classics will almost certainly have this effect!) Even much French teaching was based on the assumption that the main contact with the target language would be through reading the classics of French literature, a not unworthy aim.

But as we have all become partners through the European Community, rather than some of us dominate and some of us be dominated in a fundamentally colonial relationship, and as the work of bodies like the Council of Europe has become more influential, multilingualism has been increasingly recognised as a right rather than a rare privilege. Consequently schools are expected more and more to provide it for everyone, not just for a preselected elite of quasi-classicists. No longer could fluent mother-tongue literacy be taken for granted (if it ever really could); no longer could access to literature, philosophy, or 'educated discourse' be seen as primarily a matter of intelligence, however defined. Motivation became a more publicly discussed issue, it was assumed that straightforward conversation needed to be taught, and the traditional sources of fluency activity in earlier language teaching, reading and composition, were not so readily available for those who were not classified as readers or writers in their mother tongues.

Yet this shift developed just as resources for education were at a higher level than earlier, when teachers were reacting against the aridity of audiolingualism, and when general educational movements were supporting more small group work and greater learner autonomy. Educationalists were feeling guilty about privileged knowledge, and there was widespread willingness to discuss, if not implement, the priciples of deschooling.

It may be an appropriate question to ask, then, whether the communicative movement can, in any of its aspects, be criticised as part of a general, woolly, relativistic movement that permeated education as the impact of movements in the 1960s became diluted and diffused. What is there in the communicative movement that is hard and essential, and what is soft and expendable?

One immediate issue that arises from the extracts of autobiographies cited at the beginning of this paper is that language learning is not play, even if - with Arthur Ransome for instance - it takes on some of the characteristics of play. It may well

be the case that language learning can be fun, but it can never be effortless.

A second point that emerges is that it may quite possibly be cognitive as well as affective or psycho-motor. Conscious or semi-conscious attention to form is perceived by some learners at least to be valuable - though we should note Taylor's contact with the grooms of the riding school, for fluency and communication may often complement accuracy and conscious effort.

We may note here a potential conflict between the social forces discussed above and the underlying assumptions of the language learners who have been quoted. An idealised system, or some point of reference for learners, may be necessary in education. This is one reason why languages are 'hard' subjects - there are wrong answers, and ignorance and failure are easily demonstrable. For learners to grope their way to an undefined goal may be inefficient in time and effort in normal classes, and the role of accuracy work needs clear definition. Furthermore, the widespread (and incorrect) belief that communicative work is more concerned with speech than with reading or writing tends to undermine seriousness of purpose, and a commitment to extended discourse. Is it not possible to produce a curriculum and a methodology which both enables learners to buy themselves cups of coffee and leads them towards reading Racine or Flaubert, Goethe or Fontane?

Recognition of linguistic variation should not lead us to refuse to accept models, as long as they are seen as no more than pedagogical devices, means of assisting learning. Language may be inextricably bound up with power, but effective learning provides learners with a means of using power for themselves. Literacy is to be taken, not withheld by an education system in the name of a meaningless equality. Because language, and the power associated with it, has been misused, is not a reason for arguing that there can be a world without power markers, whether linguistic or other.

We have gained from the communicative movement a greater sensitivity to learner needs. But there is a risk that this is at the expense of teachers' perceived expertise. Any teacher knows more about varieties of learning experience than any one learner. That is part of the expertise, acquired by training and experience, that teachers are paid to possess. Teachers may know more about needs, though they cannot know more about wants, than particular students. Too much emphasis on negotiation, in conventional state education particularly, may be educationally inefficient, especially in language work, where learners must be in a deficit situation in relation to the target language.

Too much emphasis on functional syllabuses may lead to simple muddled thinking, for the concept of function is too general to be related to precise syllabus needs. Our attention has been distracted from the much more important issue of the role of the syllabus, and the more important role of methodology

than was previously thought in early communicative discussion. Much of Mario Rinvolucri's work has been important in this area.

But we still need to consider what function a syllabus should perform, for we still need to be accountable, and syllabus documents are the only means we have for laying ourselves open to criticism of our total approach, so that we can improve and question practice. What is clear is that there is still a role for grammar in a syllabus, providing the methodology is clear about the limitations of its role.

We still haven't clearly sorted out the relationship between teaching material and the learner. Much of the argument about authenticity has been ill-founded, for an essential feature of communicative principle has been the adjustment of language to the participants in the discourse, and learners are participants in a discourse. Material that is not adapted to learners is inauthentic to them, unless the methodology used by the teacher makes it authentic - and this is usually done by using simplification strategies! Even more, we have not sorted out the relationship between understanding, meaning, linguistic form, and motivation. Learners can respond to advanced material in areas that interest them, while they are still struggling with intermediate materials in areas that do not. One of the major losses of the recent movements in language teaching has been demanding and serious content. To quote a student in discussion, 'Who wants to spend all one's language learning time doing things that can be done anyway in sign language?'

In effect, then, we can consider many gains from the communicative movement, but can still look for improvement in our practice in a number of areas. To clarify the bases for improved activity, I propose to refer to the major characteristics of successful language learners identified by Naiman et al. (1978) in their analysis of 'The good language learner'. They state:

> Regardless of learner differences in our view the following emerge as essential for successful second language learning:
>
> 1. The learner must be active in his approach to learning and practice.
>
> 2. The learner must come to grips with language as a system.
>
> 3. The learner must use the language in real communication.
>
> 4. The learner must monitor his interlanguage.
>
> 5. The learner must come to terms with the affective demands of language learning.
>
> (Naiman et al. 1978: 103)

The first of these in fact asks for something approved by

general educational practice in all subject areas, and supported by all schools of language learning and teaching. Nonetheless, many of the activities emphasised by communicative teaching will assist the development of this capacity, since there is a major concern for participant motivation.

The second claim raises more problems for communicative teaching. Many learners, as we saw with Rambert, enjoy being made aware of features of the language, and - as Pickett's survey demonstrates - often like to do this systematically. On the whole communicative teaching has moved away from specific and overt teaching of grammar towards activities with either functional or minimal structure. Only those methodologists who wish to retain a dual system, with accuracy represented in the classroom work as well as fluency, allow themselves the possibility of overt development of the system.

The third claim clearly gains support from communicative methodology, but the fourth again demands some awareness, of a fairly self-conscious kind, of the language forms and the language system. Here again an emphasis on accuracy is supported, and also an emphasis on correction as an aid to self-monitoring.

The final claim is addressed directly by practitioners of various humanistic approaches, more indirectly by all competent and well-trained teachers, but will still be assisted by learner success. Insofar as communicative approaches increase motivation they will have a role to play here, but insofar as they prevent learners doing things they find useful (like 'come to grips with the language as system' or monitor interlanguge) they may be counterproductive.

The key question in all this, however, is the link that may be established between the various parts of the process. Even the most effective advocates of communicative language teaching have only redressed a balance, restoring sensitivity to learner needs, communicative activity and realistic language activity. To some extent the emphasis on language as activity may have hindered serious engagement with the language system as a serious and demanding object of study. Sometimes one wonders whether many teachers have expectations of their learners that are far too pessimistic. Whether this is true in Ireland I cannot say, but it is certainly felt by many in Britain that low expectations contribute to low achievement.

One answer to the problem of lack of real demand in language courses is to call for more sophisticated content. But there is another line of approach worth considering, though I shall have to argue it at a fairly abstract level, as I have not been able to think it through fully. Nonetheless, as it is an area where there will certainly be much thinking in the next decade, it seems worth exploring a little in a conference on coping with change.

On the whole, language teaching methodologists have accepted

the outsider-view of the nature of language provided by researchers in linguistics and sociolinguistics during the past half-century. However, researchers are becoming dissatisfied with these models, and they are becoming increasingly inadequate as bases for language involvement in education.

The problem is that language use is closely bound up with individuals' identity. The kind of language we use is in part a choice, either conscious or unconscious, and this applies to language learners just as to language users, for the line between the two is not easily drawn (unless it is supported by heavy institutional markers, as it is in schools). One of my students, in work not yet available, but hinted at in Rampton 1985, has shown that adoption of the role 'second-language-learner' is consciously or semi-consciously correlated with performance in English, so that different individuals may be more or less willing to operate second-language 'mistakes' in different contexts. If these contexts can be related to role-set, or to the identity being adopted by the language user, language errors become either genuine errors, or choices of social dialect, or a combination of the two. (This playing with errors is something we are all aware of in jokes and informal situations with language learners, especially in phonology, but this research suggests it has a serious side as well.)

Again, we may wish to see the whole issue of 'target language' and 'mother tongue' as problematic (Bourne 1985). These are not stable entities, and where learners locate themselves within such entities will depend on their own perceptions of what gains there are in the location they choose. And all this suggests that we should see language learning as necessarily an act of identity, and not of one where we shall impose the identities we have thought important on our pupils. At the very least, we need to ask what being a speaker of French, German, Spanish (or indeed Irish or English!) means in Ireland: what group is one bidding to join as a speaker or reader of German living in Ireland? What kinds of expression and what kinds of understanding are appropriate for someone who is resident in Ireland? What kind of people are they trying to be? Is anything more than the coffee-buying model appropriate? Particularly, how would a learner want to be perceived as a user of the language being learnt?

These are not questions I can answer for Ireland, and it would be impertinent for me to try. I raise them, though, because they indicate directions of change beyond the communicative movement, and may give us the beginnings of a basis for overcoming some of the weaknesses in that movement. Certainly they will force us to confront some of the questions about language teaching and ideology that have been neglected in the past but which are highly relevant to language learners.

Chekhov, when asked how a certain part in one of his plays should be acted, replied 'As well as possible'. Whether language teaching should be communicative (or audiolingual or humanistic

or objectively graded) seems an inappropriate question. What it should be is 'as good as possible'. Let us hope that discussion can contribute to that task.

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Mario Rinvolucri
Pilgrims Language Courses, Canterbury, UK

RECIPES FOR TIRED TEACHERS

To reduce the barrier between himself and the people in the group, Mario started the workshop sitting on the great green table in the front of the hall. He told a Peter Bichsel story: Der Erfinder. What follows is a 'skeleton' of this story, should you want to tell it orally to one of your own classes. I include only a 'skeleton' so as to encourage you to tell the story orally, in your own words, with your own fillings-out. This tends to be much more effective than reading a story to a group. Much more of your personality, your way of being, goes into a telling than a reading.

Der Erfinder

Lived in country
Drew plans, tore them up, started again
For 40 years never spoke, read newspaper, or
  received letter
Didn't know radio existed

One day realised he had made invention
Day and night checked plans, calculations
He went to town

Cars instead of horses; electric instead of
  steam trains; escalators, refrigerators.
Quickly understood - saw telephone and said:
  'Aha'
Told people in street 'I have made a great
  invention'
They did not care

He entered a cafe and explained to a man
'I have invented a machine which shows what's
  going on miles away'
'Oh the television - there's one in the
  corner - shall I turn it on?'

The inventor went home
At desk for a month - re-invented car
Same with escalator, telephone, refrigerator
The really hard thing is to invent things that
  already exist

(nach Peter Bichsel, Der Erfinder, in Kindergeschichten)

Following the telling people were paired and given 50 questions related to the story. They were invited to cross out the questions they did not like. This apparently simple instruction was repeated.

Here are the questions:

1. What did the man in the cafe tell his wife when he got home that night?
2. Is it deeply useful to invent things that have already been invented?
3. What did the inventor look like?
4. Did Chris Brumfit in this group like this story?
5. What kind of house did the inventor live in?
6. What is the underlying theme of this story, for you?
7. Where did the inventor get his living from?
8. Why did the inventor no longer know how to speak to people?
9. What new things surprised the inventor when he went into town?
10. Do you know anybody like this man?
11. What colour were the walls of the inventor's room?
12. Would your brother like this story?
13. What did the inventor look like?
14. What kind of father would the inventor make?
15. Why did the inventor finally decide to go into town?
16. What sort of town did you imagine as you listened to the story?
17. Was the inventor an anti-social man?
18. If the inventor was a Muslim, how many wives would he have?
19. In what ways, if any, do you sympathise with the inventor?
20. What did the inventor do in the trams?
21. Why did the inventor get angry in the cafe?
22. Was this man a lunatic?
23. How did the story begin?
24. Did the story happen for you in England, your own country or somewhere else?
25. Did Bebhinn O Meadhra in this group like the story?
26. What was the inventor's reaction to the new things he saw in the town?
27. Which of the new things did he probably find most revolutionary?
28. Why did this man want to invent things?
29. How did the story end?
30. Were there any roses in the inventor's garden?

31. If the inventor had had hobbies, what might they have been?
32. What sort of relationship do you imagine the inventor having had with his parents?
33. What did the man in the cafe offer to do for the inventor?
34. How could the inventor get by without earning a salary?
35. What is the symbolic meaning of the story?
36. Did the inventor grow potatoes?
37. What do you know about the author of this story, Peter Bichsel?
38. Why are there traffic lights in towns?
39. Why did the inventor often tear up his plans?
40. If the inventor was an animal, what sort of animal would he be?
41. Is this a children's story?
42. Do you think the person who told us the story liked it?
43. What was the weather like when the inventor went to town?
44. What year was the inventor born in?
45. Do you like listening to stupid stories in foreign languages?
46. Was the inventor wearing a tie on the day he went into town or his usual pyjamas?
47. Do you like answering comprehension questions?
48. What did he say to the people he met in the town?
49. How old would the inventor be if he were alive now?
50. Which is the most senseless question in the above list?

After the crossing out phase each pair was invited to put the questions they had retained to another pair.

The feedback sessions that followed this exercise was lively. At one end of the scale someone said that the exercise was 'superb'. The opposite feelings were also present in the group: "I haven't come two hundred miles just for this." One person said that she really enjoyed the telling of the story and felt that the exercise that followed was completely out of place: she just wanted to be around with the story in her head in her own way. Some participants were keen to know the animateur's intention. It is touching to be asked by fully grown adults what they should be feeling and thinking.

One participant suggested there were questions that referred to the text as opposed to questions that had little connection with the text. A discussion ensued about which text, the original telling, Mario's text, or the variously elaborated texts now present in 200 different heads. If you are writing questions about a text, should the questions concern themselves with the original text or the elaborated texts which have supplanted the original text, the texts that are the current reality in the students' minds?

The problem was raised but not solved.

The second exercise we did focussed on a text from Salut Book 2 Unit 4.

6h: **Les premiers clients**

> Il y a déjà des gens qui attendent dehors quand j'ouvre les portes. Ce sont des ouvriers qui viennent boire un café. Le boulanger apporte les croissants chauds et les baguettes. Jusqu'à 8 heures, je suis toute seule. Je sers les cafés et je prépare les tartines et les sandwiches. Le matin, des étudiants viennent pour discuter ou écouter des disques au juke-box. La matinée est calme, sauf les jours de marché. Ces jours-là, tous les marchands viennent boire leur café.

Each group member was asked to choose one sentence or phrase from the passage that they liked, for whatever reason. "Je sers les cafés et je prepare les tartines et les sandwiches" was chosen by one man because that's what he has to do every morning. "La matinée est calme, sauf les jours de marché" was chosen by two people because it gave them the feeling of a small French town. Other sentences were chosen for a great variety of reasons.

This technique is a way of getting a group of people to invest the sentences of a text with their own personal meanings. On the way, the sentences in the text get firmly practised. One participant objected that lifting separate sentences out of their context and endowing them with personal meanings in a way destroys the text. In the case of some textbook passages that students are invited to suffer through, this might be a good thing?

The third exercise proposed was for vocabulary revision. We were asked to choose two words we liked and two we didn't from a set of about 20 Italian words on the board.

People then came and wrote their nice words and their 'ugh' words on the board. What were good words for some were nasty words for others. People were asked to explain their preferences. In this exercise the teacher tries to stay as neutral as possible, savouring each student's explanation equally.

To show that you can do cognitive work on grammar with a class in an energised way Mario ran a grammar auction. Each pair was allocated a notional sum of 10,000 N. Frs and asked to budget how much they felt they wanted to spend on nine sentences in French. Some of the sentences were correct some incorrect. Each pair was advised to spend nothing on sentences they knew to be incorrect, a lot on sentences they recognised as correct and a bit of money on sentences they felt might be correct. They were given five minutes to do this budgeting and grammar thinking.

The sentences were then auctioned. After each sentence was sold the auctioneer told the buyer whether the sentence just bought was correct or not. The idea is to generate a certain amount of excitement around grammar correctness, an area that leaves many students cold.

The best way of using the auction idea is to use it instead of homework correction. Lift 15 incorrect sentences from the children's homework, correct half of them and mix these with uncorrected ones. Run the auction round these sentences. Then give the homework back uncorrected: the students read through to pick out the things worked on in the auction.

By the time people who were at the convention read this compte-rendu they may well have tried out some of the exercises described above: to you I apologise for going over stale old ground. My excuse is that these pages may be of use to colleagues who could not join us at the beginning of February in the halls of Trinity.

References

The first exercise above comes from:

Morgan, J. 1984: Once Upon a time. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

The second exercise was demonstrated at the SEAL workshop run in London in May 1985. I learnt the exercise from Lony Gold, who teaches suggestopaedically in Paris.

The third exercise comes from:

Morgan, J. 1986: Vocabulary. Oxford.
Oxford University Press.

The last exercise, the auction, is fully described in:
Rinvolucri, M. 1985: Grammar Games. Cambridge.
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David Little and Eugene Davis
CLCS, Trinity College, Dublin

FACING THE CHALLENGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES: INTERACTIVE VIDEO AND THE AUTOTUTOR PROJECT

1 INTRODUCTORY

The title of this convention seems to us in its second part - "coping with change" - to imply the possibility of battle fatigue and perhaps even a little disillusionment among the population of language teachers. No doubt this was intended by the organizing committee, if only as an ironical provocation. After all, since the First National Modern Languages Convention in 1982, teachers have been called upon to intensify the fight to secure an aural/oral component in Leaving Certificate exams in modern languages; they have continued to be bombarded with propaganda on behalf of (various versions of) the communicative approach to language teaching; there has been no let-up in the stream of new course books and supplementary materials that eager salesmen would like them to buy; and now (rather suddenly, as it seems) they must live with the reality of oral exams and listening tests and the additional burden that these impose on an already overcrowded school timetable. Language teachers can be forgiven for feeling tired, as Mario Rinvolucri's title assumes they do.

In such a situation, a talk about interactive video might seem somewhat out of place. Many teachers still do not have ready access either to video or to microcomputers, so that they are at two removes from a medium that combines the two. However, in our short presentation we hope to persuade you of three things:

- that interactive video in general is worth knowing about because it is a phenomenon that we are going to hear a lot about in the next few years;
- that the particular version of interactive video we have devised is worth knowing about because its potential can be explored and exploited by any teacher in any teaching situation (and when it is commercially available it will be well within the reach of any school whose board of management can provide video and microcomputers);
- that our version of interactive video poses some of the most urgent pedagogical questions that language teachers, and especially proponents of the communicative approach, have to confront, so that experimenting with it may produce answers whose relevance goes well beyond the limits of interactive video methodology.

We shall begin by explaining in general terms what interactive video is and how it is supposed to work; we shall then explain how our particular version of interactive video works; we shall go on to indicate briefly the kinds of fundamental question that must be confronted by anyone wanting to develop language learning materials in interactive video; and then we shall show you the system in operation. Those of you who are particularly interested in seeing the AUTOTUTOR close up will have an opportunity to do so: a system will be in operation on the concourse outside the lecture theatre during the coffee break this morning and during the lunch hour. Also, you can help yourselves to copies of our information leaflet on the AUTOTUTOR, which contains in a rather compressed form much of what you are going to hear.

2 INTERACTIVE VIDEO

Interactive video allows the learner controlled access to data stored on videodisc/videotape and in the computer. The learner gains access via the computer keyboard; his access is controlled (and the medium is interactive) in the sense that what is displayed to the learner is determined directly or indirectly by the input that the learner provides through the keyboard. That is, what happens next at any given stage in an interactive video programme depends either on a decision by the learner (e.g. "Do you want to see that again?" - "Y[es]") or on what the computer is programmed to do in response to the learner's input (e.g. "What was the main theme of the conversation you have just seen?" - "The budget"; but in fact it was the Book of Estimates, and so the computer presents the material again, perhaps drawing attention to features that make clear what the topic is).

Most industrial interest in interactive video is focussed on systems that use videodisc rather than videotape. Videodisc has two clear advantages over videotape. First, it has excellent still-frame display, which means that it can be used to store large quantities of graphic material frame by frame (like a serie of slides), as well as conventional video (moving picture and sound). Secondly, it allows immediate access to any video frame. By contrast, most videotape systems have relatively poor still-frame display; and unless one has expensive and highly sophisticated tape-coding facilities one cannot search a tape with single-frame accuracy. Moreover, it takes time to get from one part of a videotape to another. The attractions that videodisc has specifically for developers of interactive video systems should be obvious enough. The still-frame facility of video disc greatly extends the means of graphic display available to the user; while having immediate access to any video frame means that interactive programmes can skip hither and thither across the video material without involving the learner in embarrassing delays of the kind that characterize materials developed for some of the earlier and less powerful educational microcomputers ("Loading - this will take several minutes - use your time profitably").

However, two serious disadvantages attach to videodisc. First, in the present state of videodisc technology it is not possible to record direct on to videodisc; the material must be recorded with broadcast-standard videotape equipment and then transferred to disc in a manufacturing process similar to the one involved in the production of compact audio discs. This situation suits holders of copyright on video materials, because it makes pirating more difficult; but there is no doubt that it helps to explain the failure of videodisc systems to supplant videotape systems in the domestic market. More than half the point of having one's own video, after all, is that it enables one to make video recordings. It has been estimated that the cost of manufacturing one videodisc is between £15,000 and £20,000. This puts the production of experimental materials outside the range of most educational institutions, and certainly beyond the reach of Irish schools and colleges. Secondly, no doubt partly because it does not offer the facility to record, videodisc has been a relative failure on the domestic market. This explains why so far no generally accepted standard system has emerged and why there are relatively few materials available on videodisc.

3 THE AUTOTUTOR

Most developments in interactive video and most of the growing body of theorizing have come from individuals and institutions interested in computer-assisted learning without any specific subject bias. That is, the video element has been seen as a means of enhancing computer learning programmes in any area of the curriculum. In developing the AUTOTUTOR we started at the other end, and in two senses. From the beginning we were concerned specifically with language learning (though that is not to say that our system could not also be used in other subject areas); and we began with the video rather than the computer component.

We were convinced that authentic video texts (in other words, video examples of the target language in use) have a central role to play in second and foreign language learning. They offer, after all, a unique means of providing the learner with input that locates the spoken language in a precise and visible socio-pragmatic context. In principle, many different kinds of video materials can provide the language learner with useful input, but they need to be presented to him in such a way that he can draw maximum benefit from them.

As far as self-instructional learners are concerned (and we began work on the AUTOTUTOR as part of a research project on self-instructional language learning), it is clearly possible to draw up written instructions and exercises to be used with video materials. But this approach has the considerable disadvantage of an operational disjunction between the video and the written medium. In other words, the learner has to derive from one medium his instructions for the operation and exploitation of the

other. At best this means that the learner's concentration on the source of input is likely to be broken every time he turns to his written instructions or exercises; at worst it could lead to confusion, impatience, and demotivation. The AUTOTUTOR makes it possible to present instructions and exercises through the same medium as the input and at the same time to give them a genuinely interactive character. Because the video component (as speech and moving pictures) is primary, videodisc has no practical advantage for us over videotape, for two reasons. First, there is no methodological need for the videodisc facility of perfect still-frame display. Secondly, there is no need to be able to gain immediate access to any video frame; for if the medium is to be truly interactive, the video material will be presented in relatively small segments (rarely more than two minutes at a time), which means that little time will be required for spooling the tape backwards and forwards between the different phases of the interactive routine.

We recognized from the outset that there was no point in our devising a system which would be too expensive or too difficult for others to use. Thus basic design requirements were (a) that our system should as far as possible use available technology, and (b) that it should be possible to develop learning materials without recourse to either video editing or computer programming. Our system meets these requirements fully. The AUTOTUTOR itself is an intelligent controller that interfaces with (i) a BBC Model B microcomputer with disk-drive and running MICROTEXT, (ii) a U-matic or VHS videocassette recorder, and (iii) a variety of monitors/television receivers.

MICROTEXT is an authoring language developed by the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, England. It is very easy to master, requiring no more than word-processing skills. Bevan and Watson (1983) describe its structure as follows:

> The over-riding design aim of Microtext is to make simple things simple to do, so that an author can in a few minutes learn how to set up a simple branching presentation. At the same time Microtext incorporates a wealth of more sophisticated features so that as an author gains experience he can implement more complicated applications tailored to specific needs.
>
> Microtext has been designed to allow the author to concentrate on the content and flow of his material, and the authoring process is centered around editing frames of text on the screen.
>
> Microtext has diverged from many other authoring languages in attempting to make ease of use rather than ease of implementation the ultimate criterion for system design. The end result is a pragmatic compromise with a simple and concise syntax for the most frequently used facilities, complemented by plain-language commands to exploit specialised features.

To this it should be added that MICROTEXT enables the user to exploit to the full the excellent high-resolution colour graphics that are a feature of the BBC microcomputer; also that it copes easily with the accents and umlauts that are a fundamental requirement of language learning materials.

Perhaps the two most significant developments affecting language teaching/learning in the past ten years have been (i) the emergence of the so-called communicative approach to the design of syllabuses and learning materials and (ii) the advent of relatively inexpensive microcomputers to aid the learning process. All too often teachers and course writers committed to the communicative approach have tended to dismiss the computer as having nothing to offer the language learner; while too many of the learning programmes developed for computers have shown little awareness of the new insights into language learning provided by research associated with the communicative approach. The AUTOTUTOR provides one means of trying to heal this breach. Self-instruction (which is part of every learning process, however that process may be organized) cannot ignore the potential of the computer as a learning tool; yet as long as the focus is on spoken language it is doubtful whether, in the present state of technology, the computer on its own can assist the cause of communicative language learning to the same degree as interactive video. For the starting-point of interactive video, at least in our version, is precisely language in use presented visually in its socio-pragmatic context.

4 CREATING LANGUAGE LEARNING MATERIALS IN INTERACTIVE VIDEO

A description of how the AUTOTUTOR is used to create simple learning materials is also perhaps the clearest way of explaining some of the things it can do for the learner and some of the methodological questions it asks of the teacher. For the sake of clarity we shall set out the steps involved as a linear sequence. But (of course) this is a simplification: in reality one shuttles back and forth across the different steps as one's programme develops.

The first step is to select a video recording. Your choice of video text will be determined by the same considerations as determine the choice of a printed text for use in language learning: topic and likely relevance/interest for the learner; linguistic and thematic complexity in relation to the level of competence that the learner has already achieved; what you expect the learner to get from the text and how you want him/her to exploit it.

The second step is to use the AUTOTUTOR to divide the video into learning segments of a length appropriate to the pedagogical purpose that the video is intended to serve. By and large the video has to be segmented according to a general sense of where one can appropriately insert breaks in its developing meaning. Thus one's first steps in authoring with the AUTOTUTOR tend to

reinforce the communicative intuition that meaning has priority over all other considerations. (Note that it is not obligatory to use the whole of the selected video recording; the AUTOTUTOR can be programmed to use only those parts of a recording that the author requires.)

Having segmented the video, the third step is to decide whether the segments are to be presented to the learner in the order in which they appear on the video recording or in some other order. Two factors have to be taken into consideration here, one linguistic/pedagogical and the other operational. First, if the original order of the video material is changed, the comprehensibility of the video segments may be adversely affected as the semantic context progressively established by that order is undermined. Secondly, a re-ordering of video segments will necessitate more spooling backwards and forwards, which of course takes time. The AUTOTUTOR is capable of spooling the videotape at the same time as the learner is interacting with the microcomputer; but the more changes you make in the original order of the video material, the greater the ingenuity you will need to exercise in order to create a programme that runs continuously, without any of those embarrassing pauses that are characteristic of the less powerful microcomputers used in education and training.

The fourth step is to decide how each segment should be presented to the learner. For example, you may want the learner to view the segment before he is presented with any information about it; alternatively, you may want to begin by providing the learner with a focus on the segment - by telling him what to watch/listen for, or by giving background or contextual information. One of the favourite techniques of communicative language teaching is the "advance organizer". The AUTOTUTOR is a good way of testing this technique, because the interactive routine inevitably provides feedback on how successful or otherwise an advance organizer really is. (And if the one you have devised doesn't work, you can easily devise another.)

When you have provided for the learner to see the segment - once, twice, or as often as you determine; with or without introductory material presented through MICROTEXT - the fifth step is to devise an appropriate interactive routine in which the segment can be embedded. Clearly the mode of presentation will depend on your pedagogical purpose, which will also determine the kind of interactive routine you will use. Essentially your routine will be built around two forms of learner response: (i) the learner can be presented with (say) a series of statements about the segment and must say whether each statement is true or false by using two keys (perhaps Y[es] and N[o], or T[rue] and F[alse]); (ii) the learner can be asked an open-ended question to which he responds via the keyboard. MICROTEXT is so structured that the author can determine not only what elements are essential for a correct/appropriate reply to the question but also what kind and degree of error should be allowed in the learner's reply. When we first began to experiment with the

AUTOTUTOR we found open-ended questions an attractive challenge both to ourselves as programmers and to prospective learners. But we had not reckoned with the fact that few learners are likely to come to the AUTOTUTOR with well-developed keyboard skills. If the learner needs a lot of time to type in the answer to an open-ended question, the interaction quickly loses its immediacy. More recently, as you will see in our demonstration, we have tended to concentrate on asking questions that can be answered with a single key-stroke. We are also intent on avoiding too many echoes of programmed learning: on devising ways of asking questions and (more especially) presenting answers that do not undermine the learner's sense of autonomy and that demand as much concentration as the input itself. Again our demonstration should show more clearly what we mean.

The sixth and final step in our authoring sequence is to decide how to move from segment to segment, and in particular what to do at the end of a segment if the learner performs the interactive routine unsatisfactorily. For example, you may want simply to give the learner the right answers; or you may want to take the learner back to the beginning of the segment and present him with further introductory/focussing information; or you may want the learner to view the segment again and then follow a different interactive routine. Or, as increasingly we have come to believe, you may think it preferable to let the learner be the best judge of what to do next.

At this point it is appropriate to show you a video of the AUTOTUTOR in action. It lasts about seven minutes and as it is playing we shall draw your attention to features that illustrate the main points we have made.

.....

One of the things that most people know about computer learning programmes is that they take a long time to write. Last week we showed the AUTOTUTOR to a visitor who had some experience of developing computer-assisted learning materials. We demonstrated the programme you have just seen and asked him to guess how long it had taken us to write from beginning to end, bearing in mind that we began with a fairly clear idea of what we wanted to do. He estimated six weeks; in fact it took one afternoon. This is worth emphasizing, because if do-it-yourself interactive video has any kind of future in schools and colleges it must be not only easy to master but quick to program.

5 CONCLUSION

In a short talk like this it is impossible to do more than introduce in a compressed and inevitably simplified way something as complex - both technically and methodologically - as interactive video. But we hope we have said and shown you enough to persuade you that interactive video in general and the AUTOTUTOR

in particular are indeed worth knowing about and that experimentation with the AUTOTUTOR may well provide insights that have general relevance for language learning and language teaching.

We have established an international network of experimental AUTOTUTOR users who (we hope) will provide the first assessment of interactive video by people centrally involved in the language learning/teaching process. Among the things members of the network are interested in doing are: using the AUTOTUTOR as a project resource in second-level language classes (in other words, having the learners make up their own interactive programmes); exploring the possibility of applying the same MICROTEXT routine to more than one example of a particular text-type (in order to reduce authoring time); building up various kinds of database in Basic to which the learner can be referred at selected points in an interactive routine; looking for ways of using the AUTOTUTOR as a communicative testing tool (MICROTEXT can be programmed to store and analyse test scores).

In this talk we have deliberately concentrated on what might be described as the basic AUTOTUTOR system. But that basic system can be enhanced in various ways. For example, it is already possible to add on a Tandberg AECAL audio cassette recorder as an additional or alternative source of audio input; and one of the manufacturers of video monitors promises us in the near future a monitor that will make it possible to overlay text on video, which will open up a whole new range of possibilities for presentation. At the moment the AUTOTUTOR runs only with the BBC microcomputer, but we hope in due course to make it available for other operating systems. The possibilities for extending and elaborating the system are almost literally endless. However, we shall do our best, with the help of our network of experimental users, to ensure that the onrush of technological development does not preclude or obscure serious experimentation with the basic system.

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PANEL DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONVENTION

Edited by Bebhinn O Meadhra

The panel was made up of practising teachers and a Department of Education inspector, who between them represented all four languages and a variety of approaches:

Helen Stillman (Chair)
Anne Clark
Natucca Cordon
Helen Harnett
Bill Richardson
Mary Varilly

QUESTION 1

"I question the validity of cloze tests. Often the material is so difficult that I wonder what they test! One can be a grammar expert and yet not know what to put in the blanks. I suggest instead either translation into the target language or a straightforward grammar section."

MARY VARILLY:

Cloze tests may not be ideal, but they are going to figure in the exams for a number of years and so we should address ourselves to finding successful ways of using them.

Cloze tests are language awareness tests: one's assessment of what structural or lexical items are missing is based primarily on one's perception of the contextual meaning while at the same time paying attention to clues in the text, e.g. the gender or number of associated words. Because it draws on overall skills, a cloze test is not necessarily best prepared for by doing cloze tests, but rather by the development of awareness of the target langage and by the acquisition of a good vocabulary and a good knowledge of structure, all of which may perhaps best be done by reading.

From a test deviser's point of view, the emphasis in choosing a test passage should be not so much on the question of difficulty of wording as on accessibility of meaning. A passage should be picked to which students can relate - it makes sense to provide passages which are to a certain extent topical. For this reason too, reading would be a major element of classroom preparation, with some work on looking out for grammatical clues and indicators.

QUESTION 2

"How does the panel suggest that teachers help their students maintain a high level of proficiency in the written language as required, for example, by the matriculation exam, and at the same time achieve the objectives of the more recent communicative approach with its oral and written content as in the new Leaving Certificate exam?"

HELEN HARNETT:

Most teachers would agree that it is extremely unfair that students should be examined in writing in two totally different ways as they are at present in the NUI matriculation exam and the Leaving Certificate. The matriculation exam tests translation into and from the target language, tasks no longer included in the Leaving Certificate exams. This causes problems for students and for teachers. The PTA has complained about this to the NUI modern language professors, but as yet no change has been forthcoming.

Then we come to the eternal problem of written accuracy. It is not because of the new syllabus that we have problems in the written language: accuracy was a major problem in the classroom even when we were spending 100% of the time on writing and reading.

A high level of proficiency in written language should not be defined purely in terms of accuracy: the ability to express oneself in writing needs to be emphasized. Hans-Eberhard Piepho in Dublin last week reminded us that batteries of grammatical exercises are not the key to a high level of written proficiency for the vast majority of learners. They pay off only for a small number of students who are natural rule-learners. Research has found that reading has a far greater contribution to make to improving the standard of written production.

Materials in which all four skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking - are integrated and interdependent have a better chance of producing good writing than writing exercises in isolation. Working with students on discovering the pattern in their own errors is also helpful. Stephen Krashen's new book, Writing, is a slim volume full of useful ideas.

QUESTION 3

"Is literature a very important part of the course? If so, how is it best integrated into the present course? (Time seems to be the problem!) How does the panel feel it should be tested?"

BILL RICHARDSON:

Literature is important and it can be successfully brought into the course if it is carefully selected to be relevant and appropriate to one's students. Literature covers such a wide range of materials that you can find something that will work for your students - perhaps a modern short story written simply but well. You can even pick examples which are very close to the spoken language.

Having selected pieces which are suitable, you can help students to understand what they are reading by a variety of methods: by summarizing the material beforehand, by various comprehension exercises, even by translation. Literature can also be used thematically in conjunction with projects on aspects of the culture and society whose language you are studying. In such cases the student uses the piece of literature as a source of information for her/his project.

On the question of examinations, one problem is that a tendency to too much "lit. crit." was followed by a swing towards a very banal type of questioning on event and plot, etc. What we need to do is to steer a middle course which would be much more interesting and more fruitful.

QUESTION 4

"Video and taperecorded materials sometimes induce passivity on the part of students. What preparatory or accompanying activities would the panel propose in order to combat this passive effect?"

NATUCCA CORDON:

Pupils should never attend a video session without paper and pencil: the short-term memory eventually disappears and very little is retained from just watching TV. In my classroom I use not only the video but also the OHP and photocopies. First I show the video, then I ask the pupils to jot down any vocabulary that they don't understand. Having gone through that, we play the video again and at that stage they understand most of the tape. I give any extra explanation or information in Spanish, introducing it gradually. In a first year class, I do it all in English, in a second year class I use some Spanish, and eventually in sixth year I do it all through Spanish. This can be a good way of reinforcing what has already been taught in the video tape. It is very useful to have a worksheet prepared on the video; you can use the photocopies of it with several classes if you have the pupils write their answers in their copies rather than on the sheets.

Sometimes I have found it useful to ask questions beforehand and then go over the vocabulary and let the pupils do the exercises by themselves. This is a good aural exercise. Sometimes I ask them to learn vocabulary, to fill in gaps in sentences I have already given them, or to tell what happened, and I always do a lot of exercises and games on certain patterns that I feel are of interest.

QUESTION 5

"How can one best cope with mixed-ability senior-cycle students, in a small school with no facility for two classes?"

BILL RICHARDSON:

Many modern language teachers in Ireland are faced with this difficult and demanding situation. Perhaps the most obvious strategy for coping with it is to aim a lot of what you do at the middle range of your class, necessarily sacrificing to a certain extent the attention you can give to the weaker and to the better people in the class.

Group-work is very useful because you can have groups which are each mixed-ability and in which each student has something to contribute at his/her own level - the weak can gain confidence and the stronger ones have an opportunity to shine.

NATUCCA CORDON:

I have a sixth year comprising very good honours students and also very poor pass-level ones, so I organize my week so that one day I pay attention to the pass students and one day to the honours students and on two other days to both groups together. In practical work sessions it is very important to give extra help and walk around the classroom, expecting the good ones to do very well and exacting a higher standard from them while getting the weaker students to perform well at a simpler level. Graded exercises are useful, as is graded praise, judiciously distributed. I find small-group work on dialogues and tapes very helpful.

QUESTION 6

"Perhaps you would kindly outline the arrangements, if any, that are being made to train teachers in the use of the proposed new methods and materials?"

MARY VARILLY:

A lot has been done in this area. Arrangements are being made for in-service training by several bodies. The total amount of money available for in-service is not great, but the Department of Education has given modern language teaching a very high priority. There is an enormous amount of co-operation between all concerned. In the last few years, the subject associations, the cultural institutes, third-level people, second-level people, teachers generally, and other institutes like ITE, have got together and have really got things moving on training teachers. It should be borne in mind, however, that in Ireland, in-service is voluntary and we cannot force everyone to avail of it.

HELEN HARNETT:

I would like to congratulate the modern language inspectorate for having worked so hard to get us a big slice of the in-service budget. Nevertheless, the feedback from teachers would indicate that the present arrangements are hopelessly inadequate and haphazard, despite all the laudable attempts being made by the inspectors, the cultural institutes, the universities, the NIHEs and everyone else. The teachers feel that they need far more, and the FTA would like to see a national policy on in-service education for modern languages.

QUESTION 7

"If you have done well as a teacher under the old system, what skills do you have to develop to cope with the new approach, and what skills can be simply transferred?"

NATUCCA CORDON:

It is not necessary to throw out all your old skills. I think the first thing a person has to do to cope with the new approach is to do extensive research into materials. There are a great number of materials on the market, most of them very attractive but not all of them good. The old grammar skills can be integrated with the new materials. Old-style exercises, pattern-drills, etc. are very useful and stay in the memory, as do dialogues learned off by heart, which pupils often still know years after they have left school and use when speaking the foreign language abroad.

QUESTION 8

"Does the panel feel that the new methods, materials and evaluation systems satisfy all pupils' needs? In particular, are the less able adequately catered for?"

ANNE CLARK:

No system can satisfy all needs, but the new system satisfies the needs of a far greater number of students. The good student will do well under any system, but with the communicative approach, the good student has the scope and freedom to achieve probably far more than he/she did under the old system. But it is with the less able student that the communicative approach shows its great strength. The weaker student under the old system had a very poor chance of success. A sense of failure was engendered right from the start, with a disastrous effect on motivation. The new system at least gives credit for the bit that is known.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Margaret Mohan
Mount Temple Comprehensive School, Dublin

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE TARGET LANGUAGE

Coming into teaching at a time when the Direct Method was still in vogue, for a good many years I felt guilty if my classes were not conducted in the target language throughout. On the other hand, I had the feeling that a mixture of mother tongue and target language was more appropriate. The idea of using/not using the target language all the time is a matter of considerable importance because nowadays many people will tell you that "communicative methods" imply teaching through the target language. In doing so they start from a false premise. There is no such thing as the "communicative method"; there is a communicative approach. This can be applied to many methods. However, the best book to go with this approach is not a book at all but a loose-leaf file for both teacher and pupil, into which goes anything and everything, from authentic texts, including the pupil's own, to specially constructed texts and exercises.

Schools are looking for overhead projectors, video recorders, cassette recorders and so on, all in a frantic search for the "communicative method". Although we seem to be heading in the right direction, I often wonder if we are. 1986 is the year of the new Leaving Certificate oral examinations. How good a test can an oral exam be? Surely the best way to certify that the candidate can communicate orally about ordinary everyday things in ordinary everyday foreign language is for the teacher to do so? I feel that in the euphoria engendered by the new exams we may miss the wood for the trees. The best place to start communicating is in the classroom, about what goes on in the classroom and school, while something is going on in the classroom. After all, pupils spend an enormous amount of time in school during the school day. This is what classroom management is all about.

Jane Willis has the following to say about teaching English through English in her book of the same name:

> Teaching English through English means speaking and using English as often as you possibly can, for example, when organizing teaching activities or chatting to your students socially. In other words it means establishing English as the main language of communication between your students and yourself; your students must know that it does not matter if they make mistakes when they are talking, or if they fail to understand every word that you say. They must recognise that if they want to be able to use their English at the end of their course they must practise it during their course.
> (p.xiii)

What do teachers do? On the subject of teachers in general,

Sinclair and Brazil (pp.22ff.) say that we tell pupils things, get pupils to do things by ordering, controlling and instructing, organizing the teaching/learning process. We get pupils to say things by questioning and probing, stimulating various kinds of talk, involving pupils and getting them to commit themselves. We also evaluate what pupils do. Sinclair and Brazil go on to outline three aspects of teaching: content, organization and discipline, and it is organization and discipline which concern us here. In the area of organization "There is the school timetable .... There are the activities in a lesson, experiments, examinations ... preparation, homework ... and all the other things that students have to do." In the area of dscipline "There are roll-calls and registers ...."

When I think of the real communication which takes place in my class during any forty-minute period - and here I do not mean communication induced by me by means of a text or a role-play and so on, then I think of examples like the following.

Roll-call (beginners' class, end of term 2)

	Teacher	Pupils
1.	John Smith	Hier!
2a.	Dermot Martin	Nicht hier!
	Wo ist er?	[silence]
	Nicht in der Schule?	[chorus:] Ich weiss nicht
	Wer hat ihn in der letzten Stunde gesehen?	Maybe he's with Mr Jones
	Auf Deutsch, bitte!	Er ist mit Mr Jones, I think
3.	OK! Weiter!	
	Aine Ryan	Hier!
	Ich gratuliere. Ich habe gehört, du hast einen Preis gewonnen. Was hast du gemacht?	Eh, eh ...
	Sag es ruhig auf Englisch	A project on the butterflies of the Aran Islands
	Wie interessant! Hast du es mit?	

The whole class gets involved in this sort of exchange, especially if other people also did projects.

2b. Enter Dermot Martin 10 minutes later.

Na, endlich! Wo bist du geblieben?	Miss, I was in sick-bay
Hast du einen Zettel? A note?	Here
Danke schön! Feeling better?	Yes, thanks
Setz dich!	

4.

	Miss, darf ich zum Musik-unterricht?
Ja. Von wann bis wann?	Von 10.30 Uhr bis 11 Uhr
Gut. Bring deine Mappe mit!	
Bis morgen!	'Wiedersehen!

Think of all the language learning involved here. Often when referring to a new grammar item one need only refer to the store of language built up during the course of such exchanges. It is under the heading of Classroom Phrases that a lot of the necessary jargon is to be found in recent publications.

Let us go on to the body of the work in the classroom and let me give you an example of group work with a class of eighteen in their third year of German. The class has been working on a package from Inter Nationes entitled "Das München-Spiel" in which they have seen slides of Munich, heard a commentary on places of importance, and listened to Münchener talking about the place they work in. The class had to extract specific information from the tapes with the help of a grid. The object of the exercise is the "München-Spiel", a board game of which I have only one copy. Therefore, the pupils must work in three groups, with one group playing the board game while the other two groups prepare an itinerary of Munich. Activities are rotated.

Management involved:

a. Telling the class what is to be done. Telling the whole class in German and, if requested, in the mother tongue, but only what has not been understood. Here one needs a good set of teacher "sensors"!

b. Getting pupils to rearrange the room. They should be accustomed to group work at this stage.

c. Giving the board game to one group. This group tries to decipher the rules in German. They inevitably use a mixture of German and English here. Most of the German needed to play the game has already been learnt or is on the board itself.

d. Explaining the work on the itinerary, distributing brochures. Use German unless requested for explanation. Group leader elected in German. Brochures studied using English and German, also discussion. The end-product should be hung on the class bulletin board as it is a truly authentic text.

Now to get to the point of conducting classes in the target language, not in any order of priority:

1. Pupils should be made to learn off classroom phrases and these phrases should be used frequently. Pupils could build up a collection of these in a folder.

2. Constant use of the same phrases, plus English or gesture at first if necessary.

3. Always use more of the target language than they can use.

4. Harness things learnt in other situations.

5. Talking and doing.

6. Foreign language summaries of things they tell you in the mother tongue, for example, for use on the bulletin board.

7. Do not be afraid to use the mother tongue, and not necessarily as a last resort.

8. Monitor and diagnose from what you hear rather than correcting pupil errors all the time.

9. Prowl around when they are supposed to be working in the foreign language and make sure the pupils realize what you are up to. This is very important in the early stages.

10. Use the language the pupils produce.

11. Plan with the pupils from the first lesson. Convince them that foreign language use in class is essential.

When is English (i.e. mother tongue) used?

i. When discussing goals, for clarity.

ii. When checking comprehension.

iii. As an aid to learning off, to aid memory.

iv. Testing, e.g. instructions.

v. Explaining, when necessary.

vi. Talking about culture, particularly in the junior stages.

vii. Teaching grammar.

viii. Instructions, e.g. for some levels of role-play.

ix. Pupil-to-pupil asides!

My position is the same as Michael Buckby's, that is, "... to use English as little as possible, but to accept that a class of young people, all of whom speak English, will be helped more efficiently to acquire another language if they and the teacher learn when it is most efficient to use English" (1985, p.53). Michael Buckby also maintains that "the bain linguistique has been responsible for many linguistic murders by drowning" (ibid.,

p.51). What I would advocate is a douche linguistique.

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Hertha Stieber
St Joseph of Cluny, Killiney

DEVELOPING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH MATERIALS

It would be ideal if we could encourage students to take as much responsibility as possible for the content, the preparation and the teaching of their courses. At the beginning of the school year the aims set by the examinations and by the students themselves should be discussed with the teacher. From then on, implementation of the goals would have to be closely monitored mainly by the students with help from the teacher. In an ideal situation, the teacher's role would consist mostly of supplying materials and giving advice.

Experiences in Denmark and Germany

In talks given recently to the I.T.E. Modern Languages Project in Dublin, Leni Dam from Denmark and Hans-Eberhard Piepho from Germany have both explained with the aid of video recordings how learner autonomy can be achieved. Leni Dam had a class of fairly low achievers motivated in such a way that they worked nearly independently in groups and decided for themselves what tasks they would tackle on any given day, always bearing their set goal in mind. Leni Dam is considered unique even in Denmark, but this should not deter us from emulating some of her ideas here in Ireland.

Professor Piepho showed a film of a second-year French class in which most of the teaching was done through the medium of French by the students themselves, naturally after a lot of preparation by the native French teacher. This class seemed to consist of children of similar background, sitting at tables which were grouped in horse-shoe shape in front of a blackboard, with a slide projector in the classroom.

Professor Piepho also outlined a most interesting experiment which says much about the importance of learner autonomy. Three schools were selected: nothing was done in the first school; in the second school the English teachers were given intensive training; and in the third school nothing was done except that a lot of pictures, posters, etc. were displayed relating to the themes to be covered in the English classes. The result of the experiment was that the performance of pupils in the first school did not improve; that of pupils in the second school improved only slightly; while the performance of pupils in the third school showed a marked improvement.

The situation in Ireland

Here in Ireland the situation is of course quite different

from that in Denmark or Germany. In many classes we have to cater for a very wide range of abilities and backgrounds. Classes can be extremely large and seating arrangements are almost never of the kind seen in Denmark and Germany. There is another vital factor which militates against genuine learner autonomy, and that is that students, on the whole, are not used to taking decisions on the "what" and the "how" of their learning.

All this is by way of an introduction to my own efforts to encourage learner autonomy. All groups of learners are different, but my experience may serve to stimulate other teachers.

Third-year students learn about fashion

I got a class of mixed-ability girls of about 14 years to fill in a questionnaire about the topics they would most like to talk about:

1) What I like to talk about with my best friend:

Boys	11	School	7	Other	12
My friends	8	Sport	6		
Clothes	8	Pop/stars	5		

2) What I would like to talk about to a person of my own age whom I had just met:

School	7	Music	6
Family	6	Friends	5
Hobbies	6	Sport	2

3) What else I would like to learn about in German:

Fashion	3	Parties/	
Music	2	discos	3
Sport	2	Other	7

There are of course many ways of introducing these topics, but I will describe what I did with the help of 6th-year students. The following were the main stages:

1) Questionnaire given to 3rd-year students.
2) Pictures selected by 6th-year students.
3) Commentary written by 6th-year students.
4) Slides produced.
5) Commentary spoken on to cassette.
6) 3rd-year students filled in grid while listening to and watching fashion show.
7) 3rd-year students matched pictures to captions.

After we had decided on the topic I asked my 6th-year students to select from fashion magazines pictures of clothes they thought 3rd-year students would like to wear, bearing in mind that they should select a variety of outfits, patterns, material, etc. They cut out the pictures and glued them on to white paper. The students took their work home and composed a fashion commentary for each picture. Next day this was held up in class and described. As there were only 11 students in the 6th-year class this worked very well and small errors could be corrected.

Then I noticed my mistake in letting the students cut around the clothes: they would not be suitable for the slides I wanted to make! Another set of pictures had to be selected. The captions were removed from them, but otherwise they were not cut out. I saved the captions in an envelope and had slides made (at a cost of £3.50 each) by CPL, 11 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, tel. 767890. It would be much cheaper to take the slides yourself, or better still to ask one of the students to do it. The slides were definitely worth investing in. The students found them much more exciting than the pictures from magazines.

The making of the slides took a week, and as there was now not enough time to get new captions written by the 6th-year students, I made up a commentary and spoke it on to cassette myself. But I must admit, the girls' commentary would have been better.

If any other teacher would like to do a similar project she could speak the commentary herself or get a native speaker to do it. Either way works well, for the students are so thrilled with with the slides that they do not mind if the description of the clothes is a bit unprofessional.

Now back to the 3rd-year pupils: Mindful of Professor Piepho's experiment, referred to above, I put up as many fashion pictures as possible on the notice board in the classroom. I did not put them all up at once, so that the students would have something new to look at every day. In retrospect I am quite sure that I should have asked the girls themselves to cut out the pictures and captions from magazines.

One lesson was then spent finding out what the learners wanted to say about a boy they liked and a boy they did not like. This was most enjoyable, for according to the questionnaire it is their favourite topic of conversation with their friends. For homework they drew the two boys and described them as well as their characteristics. Here I was able to slip in some characteristics which I thought important, and these were accepted by the girls. The best pictures and descriptions were put up in the classroom.

Developing this topic, the next lesson consisted of a revision of the imperative. Using German imperative forms, the

students had to tell one person, two people or the teacher to put on different garments. Experience has shown that hats, gloves and a waistcoat are articles of clothing which are easy to put on.

In the third lesson "Wie findest du das?" ("How do you like that?") and "Das finde ich ..." ("I think this is ...") were introduced. The students had already acquired a large vocabulary for describing clothes during the previous lessons. Next the following grid in German was distributed and explained:

CLOTHES	DESCRIPTION	PRICE

It is important to say that the grid had to be filled in in the target language: students are used to answering in English in the new foreign language examinations.

We found that the room with the slide projector had only one socket, and a student had to be sent to locate a cassette recorder with a battery. So we looked at the pictures without the commentary and the students were invited to give their opinion on the different outfits, which they enjoyed doing.

When we had a suitable cassette recorder the fashion show started and the students filled in the grid while looking at the pictures and listening to the cassette. A student operated the projector and I worked the cassette recorder. We managed to get through the material one and a half times.

During the next lesson the tape was played once more on its own and the entries discussed. Then the magazine pictures were put on the walls with Blu-tack and they had to be matched to their original captions, which were photocopied in a jumbled up way on the reverse side of the grid. It is a good idea to number the pictures and put letters in front of the captions. I made thirteen slides, and this was a suitable number.

The number of each slide should be spoken on to the cassette as this makes it easier to fill in the grid and operate the projector. Finally, students of both classes could be asked to write about the clothes they have worn from babyhood, or about the fashions their grandparents, their parents and they themselves have worn.

Other topics suitable for this type of project would be vehicles, animals and pop stars. If you are genuinely interested in learner autonomy it would be worth your while to read the material and look at the videos produced by both Leni Dam and Hans-Eberhard Piepho.

Joe Sheils
Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH FOR THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

A REAL SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER!

What do you think a real second language teacher is? A real second language teacher is _____.

A real second language teacher is on my side
A real second language teacher lets me be me and tries to understand what it's like to be me
A real second language teacher accepts me whether he or she likes me or not
A real second language teacher doesn't have expectations of me because of what I've been or what he or she has been
A real second language teacher is more interested in how I learn than what I learn
A real second language teacher doesn't make me feel anxious and afraid
A real second language teacher provides many choices
A real second language teacher lets me teach myself even if it takes longer
A real second language teacher talks so I can understand what he or she means to say
A real second language teacher can make mistakes and admit it
A real second language teacher can show his or her feelings and let me show mine
A real second language teacher wants me to evaluate my own work.

This 'poem' seems to me to capture the atmosphere of a learner-centred classroom. Perhaps we might use it as a stimulus for a brain-storming session where we collect as many key words or concepts as you wish to propose to describe the role of the teacher in this classroom. I suggest that our collective list of key words or concepts be categorised, possibly under the headings: attitude, knowledge and skills. We could then look at some video recordings which reflect quite specific interpretations of the teacher's role and analyse them in the light of the categories which we have established. The videos are:

- 3rd year English class in Denmark
- 2nd year French class in Germany
- Intermediate level Adult EFL class

After discussing these video extracts we might attempt to draw up a typology of teacher competences and the following description of the role of the teacher will then be offered for further discussion and elaboration.

* *

The role of the teacher

The recent emphasis on a more learner-centred approach to second language learning/teaching actually implies an enhanced and more demanding role for the teacher than heretofore. Only a teacher can develop a learner-centred classroom. Recent developments in educational philosophy and in linguistics have challenged many former assumptions about teacher roles and classroom practices which may be summarised in respect of teacher attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Attitude: The teacher is no longer the dispenser of knowledge, the one who decides whose turn it is to speak next, the distributer of sanctions and judgements. She is now seen as a facilitator of learning, a resource, an adviser and a co-participant in the learning process. This involves accepting greater learner initiative and responsibility and reexamining the nature of her contribution to the learning process.

Knowledge: The teacher requires an understanding of the nature of communication, of learning in general, of language learning in particular and of the learner's own contribution to his development as a learner and a communicator in the classroom situation where learning is both an individual activity and a socially-shared experience.

Skills: The teacher needs the ability to apply this knowledge to the learning experiences of the classroom. She must call on a range of skills which demand not only a high degree of competence in the foreign language but also a critical, flexible and experimental approach to teaching, a realization of the nature of the relationship between the process and the product of language learning and the ability to apply this awareness in classroom procedures and techniques.

Whatever diverse interpretations there may be of communicative language teaching it is essentially an attitude to teaching, the implementation of which requires certain knowledge and skills on the part of the teacher.

1. Attitude

(a) facilitator: the teacher facilitates the language learning/acquisition process by providing suitable exposure or comprehensible input for learners (i.e. slightly beyond the learner's level of understanding so as to contain some but not too many new elements) and by setting up appropriate activities which encourage the learner to produce language (comprehensible output).

She realizes that language acquisition is not a simple input-output mechanism but rather a gradual and complex process of elaboration of the learner's grammar. At any stage the learner has a provisional or intermediate competence (interlanguage) and learning may often be a by-product of the attempts to communicate.

Errors may occur in the learner's understanding and/or production where his developing competence is unable to cope with the linguistic demands of a communicative activity. The teacher must know when to tolerate errors in production and when to correct them depending on whether the purpose of the activity is primarily communication or language practice.

The teacher should help the learner to develop a range of communicative strategies to compensate for inadequacies in his intermediate language system e.g. approximation, word-coinage, circumlocution, borrowing from another language, mime, gesture, appealing for assistance. These strategies not only allow learners to compensate but also to learn by testing hypothesises about the target language. This 'strategic competence' is essential as the learner will never have a native command of the target language. A judicious blend of accuracy and fluency oriented activities is essential and in the latter the learner must feel free to take risks with the language. This requires a friendly non-threatening supportive classroom atmosphere/teacher attitude.

A relaxed classroom atmosphere where learner anxiety is reduced will optimise the benefits of comprehensible input. The teacher can provide suitable input 'tuned' to the appropriate stage of the learner's development through varied and graded tasks or activities which allow for different abilities and learning styles.

She must also be willing to allow the learner to become involved in decisions about content, methodology and assessment. This process of negotiation means that while the teacher may be the best judge of some of the learner's language needs, the learner must be able to relate in a personal way to the content and learning activities and assess his own achievement of objectives.

(b) resource: the teacher's use of the target language is a valuable source of input and 'teacher-talk' is usually tuned to the level of the learners. As well as providing a good model of language use and, when appropriate, feedback on the success or otherwise of the learner's efforts to communicate, the teacher is a reference source providing information on the forms and meanings of the target language and information on

the culture associated with it. This is most effective where she is enthusiastic about and empathises with the target language and culture.

(c) adviser: the teacher can advise the learner on general study and language learning skills (e.g. memorising, inferencing, analysing, guessing) so that he can gradually become more autonomous. She can provide individual assistance to learners with particular difficulties and advise them, perceiving weakness and suggesting suitable remedial activities.

(d) learner: the teacher is also a learner of the target language, the difference in the competence of teacher and learners being relative where she is not a native speaker of the language. In particular she is always a learner with regard to the teaching/learning process and must see this as part of a life-long process of continuing education. She learns not to become unduly frustrated but to cope with adverse conditions (e.g. two seater desks bolted to the floor, lack of resources, lack of understanding on the part of the school principal or colleagues, paper-thin walls or partitions, problems arising from learner's poor learning experiences in other subjects, especially in other languages). She learns that a rewarding language experience can contribute enormously to the overall development of the learner but that the language teacher cannot play the role of a 'cosmic shepherd' as there are many other factors involved in the learner's willingness and ability to fully participate in the educational process.

2. Knowledge and skills relating to the role of the teacher

2.1 Knowledge:

(a) - understanding of the nature of language and how it is used for communciation.
(b) - knowledge of the target language and of the target culture.
(c) - knowledge of how learning takes place.
(d) - knowledge of how a second language is learned/acquired and the implication for classroom activities (e.g. text types, task types, when to/not to intervene).
(e) - knowledge of the learner's language needs, of when and how to focus on practice or communication type activities so as to strike a proper balance between accuracy and fluency in classroom activities.
(f) - knowledge of the learner's interests so that he can have the opportunity to relate personally to the learning experiences.
(g) - understanding of key concepts e.g. communicative, learner-centred, autonomy.
(h) - awareness of the multiplicity of factors which influence language teaching and learning e.g. institutional, psychological, sociological, philosophical, economical.

(i) - understanding of the contribution of the foreign language learning experience to the learner's personal development as a learner and as a communicator.

2.2 Skills:

(a) - competence in the target language.
(b) - ability to critically analyse, select from, adapt and supplement commercially available materials (including Teacher's Notes).
(c) - ability to go beyond the textbook, e.g. to work with authentic materials, to improvise.
(d) - ability to provide/devise appropriate graded materials/tasks which allow for different abilities and learning styles so that learners motivation is sustained through growing confidence and enjoyment in language learning.
(e) - competence to set realistic, worthwhile, attainable objectives and to introduce creative and enjoyable tasks.
(f) - ability to prepare, organise and monitor potentially noisy (or disruptive) communicative activities involving pair and group work e.g. role plays, simulations, drama, group listening, reading or writing tasks.
(g) - willingness and ability to gradually involve learners in decisions about content, methods, learning activities and assessment.
(h) - ability to foster study skills, and communication strategies in learners so that they become more autonomous and develop skills for language learning after leaving school.
(i) - ability to appropriately assess learner's progress (i.e. to show them what they can do rather than what they cannot), to diagnose weaknesses and take remedial action and as far as possible to involve learners in the assessment process.
(j) - ability to exploit the classroom as a social situation where the target language is not only practised but used for real communication in organising activities, in discussing, learning, evaluating. This means a realization that the classroom is not simply a rehearsal studio for a later performance (which may never take place).
(k) - ability to act as a researcher i.e. to view the classroom as a laboratory and to continuously try to improve her contribution as a teacher/researcher.
(l) - ability to communicate effectively and with pedagogic sensitivity.

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1. This is adapted from a poem entitled 'A Real Teacher' (Greer, M. and Rubinstein, B, Will the Real Teacher Please Stand Up?, Goodyear Publishing Co., 1972). The adaptation is by Howard Altman in The Second Language Classroom: Directions for the 1980's, ed. J.E. Alatis et al, O.U.P., 1981.

Maura Clancy
Department of Education, Hawkins House.

THE EFFECTS OF THE NEW FRENCH SYLLABUS ON THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM.

I know that since the introduction of the new programme at Leaving Cert. level in 1983 and of the new Inter. syllabus in Sept. '85 we are all conscious of having made some changes in our approach to the teaching of French. Many teachers had in fact begun to come to terms with what is broadly termed 'the communicative approach' several years before formal changes in syllabus came about. Each of us has his/her own private 'hunches' about whether the classroom strategies required by the new programmes and exams. are better or worse than the old ones. I am quite certain that we could all discuss this topic for much longer than an hour without the need for a stimulus. However, it is my task to provide in fifteen minutes or so some kind of focus for our thoughts.

There are many ways in which I could approach the subject of changes in classroom practice over the past few years: I could speak of my own observation of teachers at work: I could talk about the results of the 'new' exams. in '85 and of the advice the Inspectors offer to teachers based on the patterns emerging from those results. However, any of these approaches would defy a fifteen - minute limit. I have chosen in fact to share with you a very small part of a very unambitious research project on the effect of the new, defined-content Inter. syllabus on the teaching of French in eight classrooms around the country.

I embarked on this project in Sept. '84. I chose from among those willing to participate four classes doing the traditional Inter. in French and four doing the exam. based on the new syllabus in June '85. All eight classes were taking the Inter. after 3 years' study of French. Four were in Dublin schools and four in schools in and around a fairly large country town. Two were all-boys' classes, three were all-girls' classes and three were mixed classes. There was a fair range of ability within each class. However, their rating of their language proficiency on the questionnaire which I am about to show you as 28.30% above average, 62.00% average and 9.70% below average probably errs

on the side of modesty! There were 248 pupils in all, 127 in the control group (i.e. those taking the traditional exam.) and 121 in the experimental group (i.e. those taking the new exam.)

The particular questionnaire which I want to look at with you during this session is one of a battery of questionnaires given to pupils, teachers and parents on various aspects of the teaching and learning of French. It would therefore be unwise to take the figures I will present to you too seriously: they will merely serve to show trends and contrasts between the two sets of pupils. They will serve above all, I hope, to stimulate reaction and discussion on your part. For the format of the questionnaire I am indebted to Dick Allwright of the University of Lancaster who is involved in classroom - based research. As you can see it consists of a list of 27 typical classroom activities grouped under the four skill headings, listening, speaking, reading, writing. The last 3 items are the various ways of working in a classroom, i.e. teacher - pupil interaction, pupil - other pupils interaction and one-to-one pupil-pupil interaction. I ran the questionnaire twice, once to find out how helpful or unhelpful pupils found these various activities, and once to discover how much time they perceived themselves as spending on each activity. On the first run +++ would mean 'I find this activity extremely helpful in my learning of French' and ---- would mean 'I find this activity totally unhelpful' On the second run +++ would mean 'I spend an enormous proportion of class time on this activity' and --- 'I spend hardly any time on activity' In either case the pupil had an option of writing a zero in the margin if the activity was unknown to him or her.

There are obvious limitations in this kind of research. The human element is not taken sufficiently into account: No. 10 'Talking to other pupils in French about something' could mean rehearsing memorised role-plays to one child and could mean more un-structured communication to another. There is also the fact that pupils at that age may not have the capacity to speculate outside their own experience and that consequently 'helpful' may mean only 'helpful as preparation for this particular exam'. It is certainly clear that large numbers of pupils perceive the activities most often done in class as being those most helpful to their task of language-learning!

Bearing all these caveats in mind and fully prepared to entertain others which you may point out to me I shall proceed to share with you a small sample of the vast quantities of data produced for me by the Trinity College Computer. I shall only present the most obvious data in this session.

First of all, taking the four skills globally, i.e. Listening 1-8, Speaking 1-5, Reading 1-8 and Writing 1-6 the following statistics emerge: 93% of those who said they spent no time on listening activities were in the control group and 7% were in the experimental group. At the other end of the spectrum, however, the contrast is less stark: 48% of those who said they spent a very great deal of time on listening were in the control group and 52% in experimental group. Again, 83% of those who said they spent no time on speaking activities were in the control group while 17% were in the experimental group. 34% of those who said they spent an 'awful lot' of class time on speaking were in the control group, 66% in the experimental group. 72% of those who professed to spend no time reading were in the control group, 28% in the experimental group. However, 68% of those who said they spent an 'awful lot' of time on reading were also in the control group and 32% were in the experimental group. (A look at the more detailed analysis of the types of reading done in the respective groups would be necessary for these statistics to mean anything). Surprisingly, of those who said they spent no time on writing activities in class 59% were in control group and 41% in the experimental group. However, 66% of those who spent an 'awful lot' of time on writing were also in the control group with only 34% in the experimental group. These statistics for the most part only confirm our own expectations of what might be happening in the respective types of classroom.

The final section of the questionnaire on ways of working in class yielded the information that 46.4% of those who spent most of their time working as a whole class group interacting with the teacher were in the control group. Only 15% of the control group spent a large or very large proportion of class time working in pairs. This contrasts with 51% of the experimental group who gave 'working in pairs' a ++ or +++ for time spent on it.

To take contrasting activities within the group listed under each skill heading, e.g. L. 4 (Listening to radio) and L.5 (Listening to English explanation of grammar-points', 58.3% of those in the control group

did not spend any class time listening to radio. Considered in terms of helpfulness only 2.4% of this same group considered this activity useful. In the experimental group almost 50% of the pupils considered listening to radio a very helpful activity. This corresponds almost exactly to the percentage (almost 48%) of pupils in the experimental group who considered that they spent a very significant proportion of class time engaging in this activity. Not quite 6% of the control group considered that they spent a great deal of time listening to radio. I think there is possibly a moral here: pupils need to be exposed to an activity in fairly significant doses if they are to perceive it as useful in their learning - process.

In the case of L.5 (Listening to the teacher explaining grammar-points in English) 41.1% of the control group spent a huge proportion of class time on this activity while only 21.1% of the experimental group felt they spent a very great deal of time on it. However, in terms of helpfulness the explanation of grammar-points in English got a very high rating from both groups, 49.5% of the experimental group considered it worth a +++ rating. So did 53.6% of the control group.

Current fears for the fate of the teaching of pronunciation appear to be justified according to this research. S.5 "Doing exercises on the pronunciation of the different sounds of French" gave the following reactions: In the control group only 16% of pupils considered that they did very frequent work on the sounds of French. 33.6% of the control group said that this was an activity with which they were completely unfamiliar. In the experimental group only 4.6% said they never engaged in this activity, while 26.6% said they spent 'a lot' or 'an awful lot' of time on pronunciation work. This is one of the few areas in which pupils' perception of an activity's relative helpfulness is in contrast to their perception of time spent on it. Only 1.8% of the experimental group and 0.8% of the control group considered this a --- activity in terms of helpfulness. 56% of the experimental group give a ++ or +++ rating. So did 19% of the control group.

I could go on with facts and figures ... well, with figures of this kind, at any rate, for a very long time. I feel that what I have presented at this stage will probably suffice to initiate the real business of the session, ie. your comments and questions.

Before I conclude I would like to make one or two non-scientific, global observations on the effects of the new programmes on Classroom practice as I see them. On the positive side I have no doubt that the pupils in our classrooms are rapidly reaching amazing levels of attainment in the skill of listening. The effect of all this exposure to good speech models is already bearing fruit in the area of oral production, especially at junior level. My only negative observation would be some apparent neglect of reading of material of a non-ephemeral kind. My greatest fear, however, is that we are in grave danger of repeating the mistake made in the past, i.e. of using the test format as the classroom method. I have in mind especially cloze-type tests and multiple - choice questions. Both are good tests: neither is a good teaching-tool if used exactly as printed on the examination page. I shall be glad to pursue this in the discussion if you wish.

I would like to thank Dr. David Singleton, CLCS, TCD, who is supervising my research, Jim Larragy of the Department of Computer Science, TCD, who had such endless patience with my lack of computer skills and especially the teachers and pupils who made the research possible.

APPENDIX

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LISTENING						
1. Listening to French being spoken by the teacher/French assistant						
2. Listening to French spoken by classmates						
3. Listening to simple French spoken on tape						
4. Listening to weather-forecasts etc. on tape or radio						
5. Listening to the teacher explaining grammar-points in English						
6. Listening to the teacher explaining grammar-points in French						
7. Listening to the teacher reading aloud in French to the whole class						
8. Listening to other pupils reading aloud in French						
CONVERSATION						
9. Talking to the teacher in French about something						
10. Talking to other pupils in French about something						
PRONUNCIATION						
11. Repeating something in French after the teacher						
12. Repeating something in French after the tape						
13. Doing exercises on the pronunciation of the different sounds of French						

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READING						
14. Reading aloud in French myself						
15. Reading brochures, advertisements, etc. in French in class						
16. Reading a passage of French silently in class						
17. Reading books in French silently in class						
18. Translating a passage of French into English						
19. Answering comprehension questions in English on a passage of French						
20. Answering comprehension questions in French on a passage of French						
21. Reading French as homework						
WRITING						
22. Writing French in class on my own						
23. Writing French in class as one of a pair or group						
24. Writing French for homework						
25. Writing letters in French						
26. Writing essays in French						
27. Writing grammar exercises in French						
WAYS OF WORKING						
28. Teacher speaking to the whole class together in English or French						
29. Working in groups of 3-5						
30. Working in pairs						

Mary Ruane
University College Dublin

NEW APPROACHES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORAL SKILLS

In keeping with recent developments in assessment and syllabus formats in Ireland the profile of foreign language classrooms has undergone considerable change. With respect to the promotion of oral skills at senior level the change is particularly marked. Insofar as these were taught at all in the past, they were catered for mainly, by means of "free conversation" sessions, open-ended question routines (mostly of the "what-do-you-like-to-do-at-the-weekend?" variety) and were in general, characterised by teacher-initiated and teacher-controlled exchanges. A visitor to a language classroom in the aftermath of recent developments could expect to find changes in the teaching of oral skills at two levels. Firstly, there are differences in terms of the variety of activities engaged in by learners with emphasis now on role-play, games, simulations and other group activities. Secondly, and this may take some getting used to, there are differences in the organisation of learning and in pupil-teacher relationships with learners functioning much more freely, initiating and managing their own activities and with an apparently reduced role for the teacher.

These new practices in the promotion of oral skills have been fed by the development in the last number of years of research into how second/foreign languages are best acquired. Some of the insights from research on what affects good productive use of the language have been outlined recently by Littlewood (1984) and many of them correspond to what teachers feel, intuitively, is likely to work in the classroom. Thus, unsatisfactory results with audio-visual/audio-lingual methods had made it clear for some time that giving time to memory work and structural drills (habit-formation exercises) did not lead to free expression. Better results might be achieved by seeking to provide opportunities for creative, personalized use of language for the purpose of communicating real meanings and messages from the beginning (Littlewood 1981). Equally, Krashen's (1982) controversial views on the importance of comprehensible input and a "silent period" in language acquisition struck chords with many teachers who could see from experience that exposure to language had an influence on ultimate productive ability. Finally, and though as Littlewood (1984 : 97) says, it is an area that is still problematic, the importance of motivational and attitudinal factors is crucial and nowhere more than in the sphere of oral skills, where tension and anxiety levels are likely to be highest.

The problems of providing the means for spontaneous, creative, conversation-like exchanges in the second/foreign language classroom are immense. Recent approaches to methodology (Ur 1981, Klippel 1984) suggest that organizing speaking activities around structured tasks of a simulated or authentic nature, can go some way in providing answers to these problems. The essential feature of a task-based approach to speaking is to provide a basic framework for each activity which will ensure, as Penny Ur says (1983 : 1), that learners speak not for the sake of speaking, but because they have something to say. This implies firstly, the designing of some kind of purpose or overall objective which will be seen as relevant and stimulating by the learners. Secondly, in order to achieve the purpose or objective a way of proceeding has to be defined and this can involve non-linguistic as well as linguistic factors. Lastly, there has to be some kind of outcome, or "pay-off" which can be presented or displayed to other participants and which is the tangible evidence that the purpose has been achieved and the task completed. This structured approach to interaction in the classroom contrasts with the looseness and open-endedness of traditional conversation classes which more often than not meant that discussion never developed, participants dried up and exchanges were unevenly distributed among learners, with some participants or even worse still, the teacher ending up with the dominant role.

In the last few years a considerable amount of task-based material for the development of oral skills has come on the market. A great deal of this material is designed for the teaching of English as a foreign language but the ideas and techniques described can be fairly easily adapted to the teaching of any language (Ur 1981, Maley and Duff 1982, Ladousse 1983, Weiss 1983, Wright, Betteridge and Buckby 1984, Klippel 1984). Given the current dearth of teaching materials specifically adapted to the needs of Irish Senior pupils, these materials will provide invaluable sources of ideas for tasks and activities. Their only limitation lies, in fact, in the quantity and range of the material they offer. Sometimes, finding one's way around the material and locating the right task, for the right group on the right day can be a time-consuming and off-putting prospect. A resource book like Keep talking (Klippel 1984) for example, provides no less than 123 activities with rubrics as diverse as "thinking strategies", "jigsaw tasks" or "values clarification techniques"! In order to put some shape on the range of material available, the following is a selection of categories for tasks that would provide a varied programme of work for the new Senior Cycle course:

(a) Problem-solving and thinking games

(b) Interpersonal activities

(c) Playing parts (role-plays and simulations)

(d) Interpreting activities (working with visual and sound stimuli).

(a) Problem-solving and thinking games: Within this category is included a wide range of games and activities which build very much on the information gap as a method of encouraging learners to interact. One participant or set of participants has information that the others are interested in discovering thereby creating the means by which genuine communicative exchanges can take place in order to solve a problem, or provide a solution. A great number of traditional speaking activities can be enormously improved by the simple addition of a genuine gap in knowledge among participants. These activities can include relatively straightforward memory, guessing,word-association or question/answer games involving quite simple responses from the learners (sometimes "yes" or "no" answers will be sufficient) and with little extended use of language or ability to control the discourse required. On the other hand, with more advanced learners they can range to intricate, problem-solving activities - "Desert island", "Rescue", "Group holiday" are good examples (Klippel 1984 : 103-110). Here the completion of the task is organized in groups, where interaction has to be sustained and discourse managed to suit different purposes.

(b) Interpersonal activities: This is a category of spoken tasks which will not suit every situation nor appeal to every teacher. The main source of ideas comes from Moskowitz's (1978) well-known work on humanistic techniques in language-teaching. Basically, the idea is to develop interaction on the basis of the interplay of personality-factors, feelings, wishes and life-experience of participants by allowing a high degree of self-expression and personal implication by learners. By directly engaging their feelings and by allowing them to talk about things that affect them personally it is hoped to make the learners aware of the need to express themselves appropriately. Good examples of these activities are hard to come by and usually it is necessary to adapt them carefully to the needs of each group if they are not to be perceived as silly or worse, invasive. Salut! is one of the rare course-materials to have attempted to provide material in this category and uses questionnaires, flow-charts and quizzes as starting-points for this kind of personalized work.

(c) Playing parts: An entire article could be devoted to the problems and challenges of using role-plays and simulated activities with advanced learners. Because of the considerable difficulties in assessing learner performance in more complex simulated activities, it is unlikely that these will be part of assessment procedures for some time to come (Mitchell 1985). However, insofar as these activities release imagination and energy and allow an immense variety of language to be used in an extended way with everyone having a set role to perform, they are invaluable classroom devices. Good simulations

provide (i) situations with which learners can immediately identify, (ii) a conflict of interest, but one which can be overcome by discussion and (iii) a set of personality types that are likely to interact well with each other. Here is an example of a simulation tied into the life-experience of school-goers and based on the well known Abend in Hamburg/ Sortir à Paris models that have been used in in-service courses:

Situation:

Four journalists have submitted 3 articles on different rock-stars for the musical section of a paper. All of the articles are worth printing but there is only space for one. This is the meeting with the editor.

Role card 1

You are Dave Burgess and your article is on Bruce Springsteen who is due to visit the town for a rock-concert in a month's time. He also has a song in the hit-parade and you feel that, because the paper serves an industrial region with a lot of unemployment and social deprivation, the readers will be able to identify with Springsteen's music and it should be promoted. You would be extremely reluctant to shorten your article.

Role card 2

You are Allen Smith and you have written an article on Michael Jackson who has a song in the current hit-parade. You don't like Michael Jackson who you feel is a lightweight. Your article exposes him and should discourage young people from buying his records. You like intelligent music and you have written an intelligent article, which you are willing to shorten if space is a problem.....

Role card 3 - for two participants

You are Hugh Perrot and Ron de Wit and you are younger than the other journalists - you are both 20. Your joint article is about Nik Kershaw and this is the first major article you have written so you are very keen to have it printed. You think that Nik Kershaw is a less well-known singer than either of the other two and should be promoted. He is much better than Jackson, and Springsteen will get lots of publicity from other sources. Your article has been well-researched and will appeal to younger readers. You are not willing to shorten it.

Role card 4

You are the editor and you have to make a decision on which article will be printed. You have no interest yourself in rock-music. You listen to all the options expressed and then you make a decision which will take into account - space, need to appeal to young people and need to sell as many newspapers as possible.....

(d) Interpreting: This category differs from the others dealt with so far in allowing more open-ended, freer exchanges to develop. The basic idea consists of using more or less ambiguous visual/sound stimuli as starting-points for discussion. Because the stimuli are open to interpretation and because they are "wordless" they invite comment, reactions, opinions and become exciting tools for creative language work. Excellent suggestions on how different stimuli can be used are to be found in Maley, Duff and Grellet (1980) and in Maley and Duff (1979). The only rule in this kind of work is that there is no correct, right interpretation or answer to any of the stimuli and the emphasis is on exploring and speculating on possible meanings. A wide range of stimuli can be used: photos, paintings, collages, advertisements, picture series, sound sequences, objects, pieces of sculpture etc.

The pedagogic implications of using speaking activities of the kind just described are not being dealt with here. Clearly, they are considerable and will have to be dealt with in the years ahead if basically good practices are to yield the hoped-for results in school-situations. Factors such as the grouping of learners, the selection and grading of task-types, the need to minimise "communicative stress" (Brown and Yule 1983), the management of feedback and the role of the teacher are amongst some of the issues that users of these approaches need help on urgently. Ultimately too, the question of appropriate forms of assessment for creative spontaneous use of language at an advanced level will have to be faced if the new practices are to be fully integrated into teaching programmes.

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Jacqueline Nelson
St Michael's College, Dublin 4

IMPLEMENTING ORAL EXAMS AS PART OF THE SCHOOL EXAM SYSTEM

Oral exams are time-consuming, disruptive, exhausting for teachers and stressful for students: is it really worthwhile including them in the internal exam system of your school?

In my school, our experience has been that it is, for obvious and some not so obvious reasons. Of course, the main aim is to provide practice and experience in the one-to-one oral interview which can be such a terrifying event for students and, indeed, familiarity does at least alleviate the stress involved. Motivation too is improved. The old cliché which is used to berate teachers - "only what is examined is taught" - should be rephrased, perhaps more accurately: "only what is examined is learned". School life has become so competitive that it is certainly difficult to motivate students to work on their oral production if there is nothing in it for them, at the end of the year, in terms of exam marks.

However, decreased stress and increased motivation are not the only plus factors. You may well be delighted to find that some of your weaker pupils who struggle hopelessly with written work and are too timid to speak much in class can actually shine when they have your individed attention in the oral exam. Obviously, the experience of even modest success in this area is bound to have a beneficial effect on their attitude to the whole subject. (Unfortunately, the converse can also be true: one of your best pupils, who answers confidenly in class, may turn into a quivering mass of nerves when he/she faces you alone across a desk; however, at least you know in time that that pupil will need extra help before facing "the real thing" at Leaving Certificate level.)

Perhaps the best, and certainly, to me, the most unexpected result of holding oral exams is an improved relationship with students as individuals. After all, how else would you ever find time to chat privately with each and every individual you teach? You gain new insights into their personalities, attitudes and circumstances: even quite serious problems, which you never suspected existed, can come out, however haltingly, during the oral. In this context, it is important that, as far as posible, the oral should resemble a normal conversation, and not an inquisition where the teacher asks the questions and the pupil gives the answers. So, if you have been asking her/him about her/his family, share some little piece of information about your own family; and if you are being inquisitive about what goes on in your student's life at the weekend, it's only polite to say what you do outside school hours yourself! Students should be encouraged too to ask questions, even if you don't always answer them truthfully! The danger is that students may otherwise leave

their oral with the vaguely resentful feeling of having been "grilled" or in some way exploited.

Once having made the decision to implement oral exams, you may well feel overwhelmed by the logistical problems involved. Just keep firmly in mind that almost any kind of oral is better than none. One myth does however need to be exploded: the idea that a teacher can somehow hold oral exams in the classroom during class periods. This really cannot work. If you bring an individual up to your desk, he/she is bound to be painfully aware of the massed audience behind and you will be constantly distracted by noise or discipline problems. On the other hand, any system which involves going around the class with questions, while it may be a valuable exercise in itself, is certainly not a one-to-one interview.

So orals really must take place outside the classroom. On the basis of a 5-6 minute interview, you will need to allow at least three and a half hours to examine a class of 30 pupils. It is essential to devise an efficient shuttle system so that there are no long delays between one candidate and the next; even so you will inevitably spend 30 seconds or so marking the preceding exam and/or waiting for the next candidate to get settled. How this time is to be found will depend largely on the internal organization of the individual school and the goodwill of the management. I intend to list four different systems which we have tried in my school, giving their respective advantages and disadvantages, in the hope that something here may provide at least a starting point for experimentation.

1. During the weeks preceding the written exams, and in the periods normally allocated to the language concerned, classes are supervised in the study hall or their own classroom and pupils come out one at a time for their interview with their class teacher.

   Disadvantages:
   - Valuable class time is lost.
   - Extra supervisors may be needed if supervision is not normally provided during the day in the study hall.
   - One individual's oral may take place two weeks before that of another individual in the class.

   Advantages:
   - Least disruption of the timetable.
   - Least wear and tear on teachers as orals take place within normal teaching periods.

2. Orals are scheduled outside normal school hours, perhaps on Saturdays. Each student is told to attend at a specific time. Teachers may be compensated by being given extra free time during the period of the written exams.

   Disadvantages: - Students hate this system and may turn

up late or not at all, so the schedule is disrupted.
- Unsupervised students leaving their oral will naturally compare notes with those waiting to go in.
- Examiners may be distracted by noise from students waiting outside.

Advantages: - No disruption of the normal school timetable.

3. During the period of the written exams, students come out one by one from the written exam of the language concerned to do their oral. As the written exam is unlikely to be long enough to allow a teacher to examine the whole class, extra time must be found. In our school, the morning exam is preceded by a study period so a full morning is available for orals.

Disadvantages: - Exam supervisors may object to the constant movement in and out of the exam hall. (Perhaps surprisingly, we found that students doing written exams did not complain of disruption.)

Advantages: - The whole class is examined in both oral and written language on the same day.
- As students are working on the written exam of the language concerned, they are in the best possible position to perform well in their oral.

4. The written examinations are interspersed with morning-long study periods during which students are supervised in the exam hall and come out one by one for their language orals. During the morning there are two 10-minute breaks.

Disadvantages: - The period of the written exams must be extended.
- A full morning of study may be too long for 1st and 2nd year pupils. They may have to be provided with alternative activities (perhaps P.E. or games) for the middle period of the morning.

Advantages: - If the study period takes place on the morning before the written exam in the language concerned, both parts of the exam can be completed on the same day.
- Students revising for the afternoon written exam are in a good position to perform well in the oral.

When you have decided on a timetable for the oral exams, you then come to grips with the problem of how to structure the oral

itself. The most obvious format is that in which the teacher assumes the dual role of interlocutor and assessor, but it is a most difficult role to sustain. It is virtually impossible to carry on a reasonably normal conversation which unobtrusively tests various aspects of linguistic competence, while at the same time assigning grades or marks. Also, any attempt to write down marks has the effect of "throwing" the student, who loses concentration through trying to read the marks upside-down! On the other hand, if you delay assessment until the oral is over, you may well feel that you are marking on a rather vague impression of the student's overall performance.

There are techniques which can help with this problem, though they do not solve it. You might consider isolating certain aspects of oral competence and testing these separately. For example, pronunciation and intonation could be tested by reading some phrases or sentences which are assessed immediately, and then these aspects are disregarded during the remainder of the exam. You would probably also find it helpful to assess intially in terms of "bands" which can be translated later into grades or percentages. This means that with a particular class in mind, you simply sit down and write a description of how you would expect an "A" student in that class to perform. Your description would include such aspects as comprehension, fluency, structure, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation. You then do the same for a "B" student, and so on. For example, the band-description of a 3rd year "D" student might read as follows:

Comprehension: understands most slow speech but sometimes needs repetition or rephrasing.
Fluency: answers appropriate, but often monosyllabic and usually halting.
Structure: fairly frequent mistakes but not sufficient to prevent communication.
Vocabulary: barely adequate.
Pronunciation and intonation: fairly frequent mistakes, but not sufficient to prevent comprehension.

Immediately after each oral you decide which band most adequately describes what you have just been listening to, perhaps adding a note as to whether you would place the student at the upper or lower end, or middle, of the band.

However, the intrinsic problem of the dual interlocutor/assessor role still remains. We tried various ways of avoiding the problem; we found no ideal solution, but there were partial successes and some interesting results. Again, I should like to give a brief description of the various experiments in the hope that you may find something of use in your situation.

1. Retrospective marking. This simply involves running a tape recorder unobtrusively during the oral and assessing the recording later. Mechanical falure and/or human error can cause difficulties, but the main disadvantage was that the technique is so time-consuming. A 5-minute oral may take up

to 15 minutes to correct as it is impossible to resist the temptation to replay sections of the tape when listening for particular points. Also a recording cannot reproduce gesture or facial expression, which are both valid parts of communication.

2. Two language teachers are present at each oral, one acts as interlocutor, the other remains silent and assesses only. This might be almost ideal if it were not, once again, for the time factor: the number of teacher-hours involved is obviously doubled. This can be reduced to some extent if the interlocutor interviews two pupils at the same time.

3. Senior students are involved as interlocutors. For example, 5th years might interview 2nd years. Of course, the senior students must be carefully prepared: they are given a list of suitable questions to ask, including two or three ways of rephrasing each question; they are taught how to put candidates at their ease and how to respond (for example: "Oh, you play rugby - yes, I like rugby too. What other sports do you like?"); and they are given time to practise on each other in class. Naturally, they can never be as skilful as a teacher in eliciting responses, but there are many positive factors. Most importantly, the teacher is free to assess accurately, but also candidates are often less intimidated and respond better. The senior students certainly benefit: they take their responsibility very seriously, even the weaker ones blossom through being entrusted with this task, and they all get practice in asking questions, an essential element in communication which is often neglected in class.

4. Two pupils from the same class interview each other. The teacher provides the framework for the conversation. For example, two 1st or 2nd years might be told to imagine that it is the first day at school, they don't know each other and want to find out as much as they can about each other. The teacher's role is then mainly that of assessor, although she/he may have to intervene at intervals to move the conversation along, or to redress the balance if one candidate tends to monopolize communication. This system is particularly suited to juniors as it is just a version of the pair-work they are used to in class and so is as non-threatening as it is possible for an exam to be.

So far, most of what has been said refers to the "general conversation" type of interview, but there are other exercises, notably role-play, which can extend the scope of the oral exam. By means of role-play, students can be asked to perform very varied tasks such as giving directions to tourists, booking rooms in a hotel, complaining about poor service, or giving a report to the police at the scene of an accident. It seems to me unfair to ask a student in an exam situation to be anyone other than himself, and so the teacher must take the part of the policeman, hotel clerk, etc. We are back then, in at least this part of the

exam, to the difficulty of sustaining the dual role of interlocutor (+ actor!) and assessor. In spite of this, role-play is very worth while. Besides the extended scope already mentioned, it also provides a framework where the linguistically weaker but creative and extrovert student can shine. Getting the message across is the essence of this type of exercise and must deserve at least a pass grade, however ungrammatically it may be done.

Finally, a word on who the examiner should be. In our experience, junior classes need the security of their own class-teacher as oral examiner: the situation is stressful enough for them without having to cope with a new voice and personality. However, in Senior Cycle it must be a good idea for teachers to examine each other's classes wherever possible. In this way students get some experience of different voices and different ways of approaching topics; this is what they will have to face eventually in the Leaving Certificate.

Sean Feerick
C.B.S. Synge Street

FRAMEWORKS FOR LISTENING

Research in the modern languages area emphasises the integrality of listening as a component of the language learning process. The practical result of this realisation is the presence of large amounts of listening material in new modern language courses, the development of mini-packages which purport to train learners in the skills of listening in the target language and perhaps most important of all the imprimatur placed by the newly instituted public examinations syllabii on 'listening' as a valid and useful part of foreign-language learning.

We now work within a context which recognises that there are four skills involved in the learning of a foreign language, and while at Leaving Certificate Level, the weighting of marks may not reflect the real importance of listening in the learning process its true value may be reckoned from the designation of 50% of available marks to listening comprehension at Intermediate Certificate Level.

In our classroom practice therefore we must address ourselves to four areas in attempting to integrate listening into our teaching of the target language, namely, the determination of objectives for the teaching of listening comprehesnion as part of a communicative syllabus, secondly, the identification of the stages in which learning comprehension happens, thirdly, the development of useful and pertinent teaching strategies and lastly the devising of adequate means of testing listening comprehension.

Working within the context of the communicative approach we might look at the headings provided by Prof. Beile in his work in the area of listening comprehension. Here listing is related closely to the situational contexts in which the learner is exposed to the language; there is a clearly defined purpose in mind; an ulterior motive is present, as in listening to a prepared announcement in a crowded railway station where information about departure time of the next train is received.

Beile also provides us with a detailed listing of suggestions on the phases that we can with profit take our pupils through i.e. the orientation phase, the directed listening phase the undirected listening phase and finally the activity phase/transfer/exploitation phase. CF enclosed document.

In the organisation of our teaching we will be concerned with phases one and two, which involve preparing our learner for reception of the recorded document (Cassette/Video) and the training of learners in techniques which enable them to isolate

and identify the essential pieces of information in a text. Here we tackle the question of methodology and the organisation of one's teaching time as it is quite clear that listening cannot happen in a vacuum, it must be relevant to the teaching in hand at a particular moment. It is important that listening be integrated with the oral, reading and writing elements of the task at hand and that it be logically and "communicatively" acceptable to 'listen' at a particular moment in the teaching time.

In phase three the concern is essentially with testing whether the text has been understood and Beile provides us with exercises which involve productive and non-productive responses instances where the learner is required to concentrate totally on listening and where he/she is required to produce some information in the provision of an answer. When the text has been understood, then we can move on to areas which transfer the new language and structures learned as in role plays. Expansion of texts and further development of themes or ideas.

LISTENING - Some Questions

1. Is the teaching of listening within the classroom 'real'? How can it be made so?

2. How do we move away from the linear approach to comprehension that we are all familiar with because of our own educational formationt?

3. How can the learner be exposed to a maximum amount of listening withoug using a cassette recorder every day?

4. What type of exercises do we need to develop to teach listening comprehension?

5. Do we use fabricated texts for teaching or texts which contain Authentic/unrehearsed discourse?

6. How do we handl 7listening with fifth-year pupils who may not have any experience in the area.

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Sean M. Devitt
Trinity College, Dublin

FRAMEWORKS FOR READING

Using authentic texts in a language class is like giving adult food to children. In our world of convenience foods there is a tendency to give very young children specially prepared foods, such as, for example, Heinz or Farley's. However, health-conscious parents are often suspicious of such products. They prefer to give their babies the food they have prepared themselves, since they know the ingredients and since they are especially careful about its preparation.

In the language class we as teachers have been inclined to give specially prepared "convenience" texts to our beginner and intermediate learners and to leave the "adult diet", - authentic texts - until the learner is felt to be sufficiently sophisticated linguistically to be able to digest it. This usually means four years at least after he or she has begun learning the language. Even then we are sometimes slow to confront the weaker learner with the full "adult diet". We may be making a serious mistake.

This paper will attempt to set out very briefly some of the reasons for using authentic texts for reading from the very earliest stages of language learning, and will offer a few suggestions about how we may make them "digestable and tasty" for the sensitive linguistic palates and stomachs of our learners.

What learners bring to the reading task

Beginner language learners come to the task of reading in a foreign language not with a "tabula rasa", but with some very useful and usable knowledge. They have, after all, been around for at least twelve years and have learned a lot about the world. We can classify this knowledge under three main headings:

(i) *Knowledge of the world*; Under this heading we may include general knowledge as well as knowledge about certain specific topics. One thinks, for example, of football and pop-music as topics about which twelve year olds are likely to have much more knowledge than ourselves. In the literature on reading such knowledge of the world is frequently referred to as "content schemata". (see, for example, Carrell 1983, Anderson and Pearson, 1984)

(ii) *Knowledge of how discourse operates*; they already know how to read and will have had experience of different types of text in their native language - newspaper articles, stories, text-books, comics, etc[1]. While these discourse-types may differ from culture to culture, in our Western world at least most of

them would be familiar to the average teen-ager. In the literature on reading this type of knowledge is referred to as "formal schemata" (see, for example, Carrell 1983, Meyer 1975, Meyer and Rice 1984). It might also be referred to as knowledge of "the vertical structure" of language, a term taken from Scollon (1976).

(iii) *Some linguistic knowledge*: our learners will know, for example, that there are such things as "content" words and "action" words; that words are joined together to create meaning; that changes occur to the forms of words in certain circumstances, etc.etc. Absolute beginners may have no knowledge of this particular language. They will lack the "horisontal structure" (again, a term taken from Scollon 1976); they lack most, if not all, of the elements needed to construct this horisontal structure. However, in contrast to the child learning its first language, beginner learners will know at least that such horisontal structures exist.

Most recent research on reading in a first language stresses the importance of the information which the reader himself brings to the reading task. Carrell (1983), for example, says:

> "A fundamental assumption of the schema-theoretic view of language comprehension is that the process of comprehending a text is an interactive one between the listener or reader's background knowledge of content and structure, and the text itself. The text alone does not carry meaning. Rather, a text only provides guidance for listeners or readers as to how they should construct the intended meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. Since comprehension involves not only the information in the text, but also knowledge the listener or reader already possesses, efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge (Adams & Collins 1979). Comprehending words, sentences, and discourse, then involves much more than just relying on one's own linguistic competence. In fact, one's linguistic competence is just one part of one's total background knowledge." (p.82-83)

Frank Smith (1973) puts it more picturesquely when he says that reading is not a question of deciphering from the printed page, but rather that most of the information comes from "behind the eyeballs".

A certain amount of research has been done on reading in a second language. (See, for example, Hudson 1982, Johnson 1982, Anderson and Urquhart 1984). It is not my purpose in this paper to deal with such research, but rather to allow you, as reader or listener, to experience for yourself the importance of your own prior knowledge when reading a text in a language which is unknown to you, and to analyse in some little detail the process

by which you cope with such a text. The text in this instance is from a Danish paper, *Berlingske Sondag* of December, 1983 in which a very small number of changes have been made.

2500 MAND JAGER

TERRORISTERNE

Over 2500 soldater og politifolk fortsatte igår en gigantisk klapjagt på fire terrorister, der slap bort, da sikkerhedsstyrkerne fredag aften befriede direktør Hans Johannson og pågreb to af hans bortførere.

Under befrielsesaktionen blev en politikadet og en soldat dræbt af terroristerne, mens en kriminalbetjent blev saret. Igår blev en tilsyneladende sagesløs mand skudt i hovedet af politiet, da han forsøgte at køre udenom en vejspærring.

...Kidnapperne, der krævede to millioner pund eller næsten 30 millioner kroner i løsepenge, menes at være de samme som i sin tid bortførte væddeløbshesten Elan, der aldrig er blevet fundet.

Befrielsesaktionen blev iværksat, efter at politiet havde modtaget et tip fra en kontakt indenfor BMH. Omkring 1000 politifolk og soldater med panserkøretøjer omringede en skovstrækning ved Kiel i Schleswig-Holstein grevskabet nær grænsen til Danmark. Der blev oprettet 50 vejspærringer og hvert eneste hus blev minutiøst undersøgt.

Terroristerne forsøgte at flygte og skjule sig med deres offer i en hule som de havde forberedt i skoven, men de blev opdaget og åbnede ild imod politiet. De kastede en håndgranat der dræbte en soldat og en politikadet.

The only changes made in the above text were the following: (i) proper names were changed; (ii) one sentence was omitted. A little reflection on how you coped with this version of the text may allow you to observe some of the processes that operate when learners come in contact with texts in a foreign language. In the first instance you may have picked out a few familiar-looking words, such as *terroristerne*, *politifolk*, *kidnapperne*. Your knowledge of the world may have suggested a general framework for what might have happened, but beyond that you are likely to have made little sense of the article.

Now try reading the text in its original form below.

2500 MAND JAGER

IRA-GRUPPE

Over 2500 irske soldater og politifolk fortsatte igår en gigantistk klapjagt på fire IRA-terrorister, der slap bort, da sikkerhedsstyrkerne fredag aften befriede supermarkeds-direktør Don Tidey og pagreb to af hans bortførere.

Under befrielsesaktionen blev en politikadet og en soldat dræbt af terroristerne, mens en kriminalbetjent blev saret. Igår blev en tilsyneladende sagesløs mand skudt i hovedet af politiet, da han forsogte at kore udenom en vejspærring.

Den britiske premierminister Margaret Thatcher lykonskede lordag sin irske kollega, Garret Fitzgerald med befrielsen af Tidey, der for 24 dage siden blev bortført af IRA-terrorister, forklædt som politifolk. Kidnapperne, der krævede to millioner pund eller næsten 30 millioner kroner i løsepenge, menes at være de samme som i sin tid bortførte væddeløbshesten Shergar, der aldrig er blevet fundet.

Befrielsesaktionen blev iværksat, efter at politiet havde modtaget et tip fra en kontakt indenfor IRA. Omkring 1,000 politifolk og soldater med panserkøretøjer omringede en skovstrækning ved Ballinamore i Leitrim - grevskabet nær grænsen til Ulster. Der blev oprettet 50 vejspærringer og hvert eneste hus blev minutiost undersøgt.

Terroristerne forsøgte at flygte og skjule sig med deres offer i en hule som de havde forberedt i skoven, men de blev opdaget og åbnede ild imod politiet. De kastede en håndgranat der dræbte en soldat og en politikadet.

In the case of the text that was reproduced in its original form as it appeared in the newspaper, even a casual glance through it is likely to have given you the general sense.[2] In this version you had precise people and events with which you were familiar. You will have been able to relate it to your memory of the events in question. This much more detailed framework gave you the means of deciphering many more of the words in the text.

It is important to remember, however, that it was the Danish text itself which evoked this framework. Thus, the framework of knowledge and the text itself were used cyclically to mutually illuminate one another. For example, you may have reinterpreted *politifolk* from "politicians" to "policemen" as a result of your prior knowledge. This new knowledge of elements of the language would then have enabled you to recall elements of the incident which you might have forgotten, or to check the accuracy of the information as given in the article. In technical terms what you were doing was combining "top-down processing" (using prior knowledge of the event) with "bottom-up processing" (decoding the elements of the text).

In so doing, you will also have come to some initial understanding of how the Danish language operates; for example, the fact that the definite article is tagged on to the end of the noun, (*terroristerne*), the formation of the passive voice (*blev dræbt*, "were killed") etc. Thus, not only were you able to make a certain amount of sense from the article when it was presented in its original form, but you also learned quite an amount of Danish, not just vocabulary, but also morphology and syntax. In fact, the process is quite like that found for the acquisition of a first language by children.[3]

Some researchers (Carrell 1983(a) and Clarke 1979) have suggested that L1 reading strategies are not transferred to L2 reading. It seems patently obvious that this need not necessarily be the case if proper frameworks are already in place for the L2 reading. Where they are not already in place they can be created by the reader through appropriate "process materials"[4]. What this means in practice is that help is provided for the reader to enable him to create for himself the framework of prior knowledge that is necessary for the understanding of the text. This help will be provided at various stages, before and/or during the reading process. (See, for example, Hudson 1982 and Devitt (forthcoming) for a practical working out of such process materials for texts in an unknown language).

Unless such process materials are provided, the learner with very limited linguistic ability approaching a text in a foreign language is likely to be smitten by "tunnel vision": he/she will be concentrating on individual words and will lose the thread of the content. His or her reading will involve only bottom-up processing; it will be "data-driven" (Carrell 1983 b). Samuels and Kamil (1984) describe this type of reading in slightly different terms.

> "This alternative switching of attention from decoding to comprehension is similar to the strategy used by beginning students of a foreign language who first work their way through a novel written in a foreign language by translating all the difficult words and then rereading the text again in order to understand it. In beginning reading, the strategy of

> attention switching allows the student to comprehend, but it comes at a cost. Attention switching is time consuming, puts a heavy demand on short-term memory, and tends to interfere with recall."(p.197-8)

This sounds all too familiar, and the effects that this type of reading produces in terms of loss of motivation and frustration can be disastrous. However, we have just seen that this need not be the case. The sources of difficulty in texts in a foreign language may be much more easily surmountable than we have hitherto realised. The full "adult" text in Danish was digestible for you because you had prior knowledge of the topic and you knew how such texts were structured. You had the first two types of knowledge mentioned above (content and formal schemata). This gave you access to the third type of knowledge, - the knowledge of the language. Using texts about topics with which learners are familiar, or texts for which adequate process materials have been prepared, may in fact be a far more effective way of learning a language than what we have been doing hitherto. It has the following further advantages: (i) it allows for language development through the choice of texts and the choice of accompanying activities; it can therefore be used at all levels of language learning; (ii) it allows reading to be an integral part of language learning from the very beginning; (iii) it provides greatly increased language input, an input that can be accessed by the individual in his or her own time. Finally, it is worth pointing out that, while the examples used above have involved media texts, the approach can be used with any type of text including literary texts.

The principles on which such an approach to reading should be based are as follows:

(i) material should be selected that is at least potentially interesting FOR THE LEARNER. (It must be tasty!) It is not only the subject matter which must be interesting, however, but the treatment of it as well.

(ii) If the learner is not familiar with the topic, (does not have an adequate framework of knowledge) he or she can be helped to construct his/her own framework using his/her own resources or resources specially provided. Such help should be in the form of interesting activities, NOT comprehension questions. The emphasis should be on self-help rather than on testing. The activities should enable the learner to comprehend the text. (This would correspond in our analogy to the preparation of the food for the young child, - chopping it up into digestible bits and arranging it attractively.)

(iii) The learner should be given opportunity to react to the text in a normal way; this may mean simply reading it and storing the information in episodic memory, if it is simply a text recounting an event; alternatively, the text may present new and interesting or controversial elements and so generate reactions

from the reader. One can imagine, for example, readers in the Irish context having different reactions to a French account of the present situation in Northern Ireland depending on their background.

(iv) Language improvement will occur naturally through such an approach. Exercises designed specifically for language improvement are really incidental to this basic process of comprehending a text and reacting to it. They can, however, be easily integrated into the process, provided they are seen to be secondary to it.

Such an approach to reading in a foreign language is consonant with the principles of the communicative approach, but it also conforms to fundamental pedagogical principles: "start from where the learner is at", "go from the known to the unknown", "centre your teaching on the learner". It also provides a powerful motivating force, since it provides material at the learner's own cognitive level and offers the possibility of immediate success with real language in use. Perhaps, therefore, it is time that we stopped giving our learners the specially doctored or sanitised language which is so often tasteless and that we changed to a healthier diet which would allow language skills to develop naturally.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Unfortunately, this can not always be presumed even in our literate society. It is important to find out about the reading skills and habits in L1 of our group of learners.

[2] Given that it is some time since these events occurred, it may be worth summarising them here: Mr. Don Tidey, a director of the Quinnsworth chain of supermarkets, was kidnapped in late 1983 by the IRA and a ransom note sent to other directors. After some time the Gardaí got a tip-off and surrounded the town of Ballinamore in Co. Leitrim, near the border of Northern Ireland. In the ensuing skirmish, Don Tidey was freed, but the kidnappers got away. A soldier and a Garda cadet were killed.

[3] See Devitt (forthcoming) for a development of this notion.

[4] The term comes from Breen, Candlin and Waters 1981.

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Eleanor Moussoulides

USING SONGS AND GAMES IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS

The fact that the mind is capable of retaining a seemingly infinite number of songs or chants has been known for thousands of years. Most of the major world religions use singing or chanting as a means of teaching doctrine and ensuring that what has been taught is retained. Most people can recall the words of a large number of songs, hymns, advertising jingles and the like, which they have never made any conscious effort to memorize. Furthermore, it would seem that children and adolescents have a particular facility for this. Yet language teachers often overlook this important means of language learning, partly perhaps because of shyness about singing themselves and/or a lack of suitable material. It is true, of course, that music is such an important part of teenage culture that the average pupil is "heavily into" heavy metal or whatever and may greet your favourite record with howls of mirth and supposedly innocent demands of "Oh, is that the kind of music they have in France/Spain/Germany/Italy etc.?" Not encouraging! It is best, usually, to introduce at 1st year level simple songs set to the kind of lively music which will appeal to that age-group. It is impossible to define this music further, but intuition, experience and advice from colleagues and pupils will help you find it. At the end I have included a list of suitable songs kindly provided by Mary Ruane and by some members of the work-group at the Convention. Occasionally, the hit parade or the Eurovision Song Contest will prove an ally, as was recently the case with "Ein bisschen Frieden" and "99 Luftballons". It is always worth recording the Song Contest, just in case!

A recent development which has been invaluable to teachers of German was the appearance of the "Singlingual Method", published by Langenscheidt under the title of "Eine kleine Deutschmusik". This method uses useful phrases from everyday speech set to well-known tunes and comes in a well-presented (although expensive) book and a cassette. Some of the tunes used are: "She'll be coming round the mountain", "The Blue Danube", "Santa Lucia", and "Twinkle, twinkle, little star". Some of the phrases are: "I am a foreigner and don't speak German well", "Please speak more slowly", "What's that in German?", "What's the weather like?" etc., covering many useful language functions. However, valuable as this method is, I feel that it is even more interesting to go a step further and ask the pupils to compose such a song themselves. An example of this activity is a typical formal letter, which has become "de rigueur" for all students of French, now that it appears on Department of Education French papers.

To the tune of "Do you want your oul' lobby washed down":

Monsieur, je vous serais très reconnaissante
De bien vouloir m'envoyer
Des dépliants et quelques renseignements
Pour mon projet de géographie.

Je voudrais également savoir les noms
Des campings de votre région,
Car mes parents souhaitent passer quelques semaines
Dans le Perigord et la Dordogne.

Je suis une lycéenne irlandaise
Dans un collège dans le Galway.
Veuillez agréer, monsieur, l'expression de
Mes sentiments très distingués.

(The teacher should make it quite clear that envoyer does not rhyme with géographie etc.)

Perhaps teachers who manage to produce useful songs with their classes, would like to send them to me and they could be published?

To justify the use of games in language learning is hardly necesary for readers of these proceedings and would be to waste valuable space. There are many excellent books of games, so rather than waste the space at my disposal, I will concentrate on adaptations of well-known television games. Many of these are really only old favourites in a slightly different guise, but I have found that to use the current television version generates greater interest among the pupils, especially when they have to explain the rules to the dim-witted teacher, who always gets it wrong.

Blankety-Blank - The object of this game is to find a missing word in a sentence. As played on television, a variety of words might fit. To ensure maximum participation, divide the class into teams and have each team choose a representative for the panel. Then the teacher reads out the sentence without the missing word and each pupil writes down a suitable word. The winning team is the one where most members have written the same word as their representative on the panel. Teams can also take it in turn to supply suitable sentences for the others.

Three Little Words - Pupils find partners and in turn, one of each pair leaves the room while the class chooses a word. The pupil then re-enters and his partner must try to guess the words in question from the one-word clues given by his partner. For example, the word which has been chosen is house:

A. Cottage
B. Country
A. Hut
B. Shed
A. Bungalow

B. House

As the name suggests, only three guesses are allowed on the television version, but I have found it more satisfactory to allow more guesses and award points to the couple who can guess with the lowest number of clues.

Countdown - A number of cards each bearing a letter are prepared and arranged in piles of consonants and vowels respectively. The pupils are divided into teams and each team in turn requests ten letters, specifying whether they want vowels or consonants. These cards are propped up on the ledge against the blackboard or stuck up with Blu-tack (3M post-it notes are also useful). The teams then compete to find the greatest number of words which can be made up from the given letters. To avoid all that preparation, it is also possible simply to write a long word on the board and let the pupils make up words using the letters contained in it. This is also a feature of the television game.

What's my line - A pupil chooses an occupation and the others ask questions to discover what it is.

Call my bluff - A word is given with three definitions, only one of which is correct. Each definition is given to a different pupil, who explains the definition. Teams decide which pupil is telling the truth, and points are awarded to the team which is correct. A dictionary may be used to find unlikely words and definitions, or the definitions may be invented by the pupils.

Quiz games are at present enjoying a renewed popularity. The new feature is the scoring. The "Blockbusters" scheme of scoring may be made on an OHP transparency or the honeycomb pattern could be drawn on a large sheet of paper and the spaces covered with differently coloured cards, cut out to fit. I will not try to explain how it works - teachers should watch at least one of these programmes and then ask their pupils to demonstrate.

"Trivial Pursuit" is only one of the quiz-type board games currently in vogue. As above, the teacher (or why not the pupils?) will have to make up suitable questions, but using a commercial board and counters etc. will add a new dimension to the age-old question-and-answer routine.

USEFUL MATERIALS

GAMES

Lee, W. R., 1965: Language Teaching Games and Contests. Oxford University Press.

Nye Dorry, G., 1966: Games for Second Language Learning. McGraw-Hill.

Wright, A., D. Betteridge and M. Buckby, 1979: Games for Langu Learning. Cambridge University Press.

SONGS

Spanish

- Mocedades
- Julio Iglesias
- Maria Ostiz
- Parchis
- Canta la Tuna
- Villancicos Espagnoles
- Cantos Regionales
- M Dolores Pradera
  (Available in Spanish record shops)
- T.V. Spanish children's programmes

French

1. Jo Akepsimas chante pour les enfants
   (album) Sm Arc en ciel 30 751

   Titres: Le Tour de France
   Si tu pars en voyage
   Jacotte
   Mon anniversaire

2. 24 Chansons et 24 Comptines
   (2 albums) A.D. 2.038 AV 4258 AUVIDIS

   Titres:
   Chansons Passe, passe, passera ...
   Mon âne
   Cadet Rousselle
   Ne pleure pas Jeannette
   Canons Dans la forêt lointaine
   La cloche du vieux manoir
   Comptines Bonjour, Madame Lundi
   Les 7 chemises de l'archiduchesse
   A Paris, sur un cheval gris
   Les pinsons

3. Les Chants de Noel

   (a) Noëls de France - Jacques Douai
   (album) Unidisc 30 1349 mono-stereo

Titres: Entre le boeuf et l'âne gris
Il est né le divin enfant

(b) En choeur, chantons Noël
A coeur joie, sous la direction de l'Abbé P. Thoir
(album) Gravure Universelle 842.024 Py Philips

Titres: Douce nuit, sainte nuit
Peuple fidèle
Noël noir

(c) Nana chante Noël - Nana Mouskouri
(45 Tours) Livre disques Philips 6274-013

Titres: Douce nuit, sainte nuit
Le petit sapin

4. Les plus célèbres chansons de France pour les enfants
Jacques Douai 33/30 Unidisc UD 30-1287

Titres: J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière
C'est la mère Michel qui ...

5. Anne Sylvestre

- Chansons pour ...
(45 Tours) ABCDISQUE 1 - SACEM 778031

Titre: Pour être sage en auto ...

- L'école
(45 Tours) MERCREDISQUE 4 - SACEM 778004R

Titres: A la recré
Comptine à compter

- Les nouvelles Fabulettes
(album) MERCREDISQUE GEANT 1. 33 i. No.598054

Titres: Le gâteau
Un froid de canard

Available on loan from: Ambassade de France, Services Culturels, 1 Kildare St, Dublin 2.

Siobhan Supple,
St. Louis High School, Rathmines, Dublin.

TEACHING OTHER SUBJECTS THROUGH THE TARGET LANGUAGE.

Language Syllabi have since the '70s moved to the communicative approach. The traditional grammar translation method has been replaced with the recognition that language has a purpose, i.e. communication. The main advantage of this new trend is the encouragement and motivation of the learner by introducing "real" use of the target language and authentic materials. Yet there is an inherent danger in this philosophy also. By adopting a communicative syllabus one has not discovered a panacea for all ills. No indeed, we may even be cultivating a new strain of virus.

Through misinterpretaion of what is entailed in a communicative approach to language teaching there has in some instances, been an overconcentration on the oral and too great an emphasis laid on survival skills and transactional activities. True, it is important to be able to ask the way, book a ticket, shop in a foreign language but for many of our learners this is not and may never be a reality. The foreign language remains a school subject locked in isolated time slots during the school week. Learners in Ireland are rarely exposed to other languages as are their counterparts in mainland Europe. The majority of the population have English as their first language and though the Constitution recognises both Irish and English, practically everything that appears or is said in Irish is translated into English, thereby undermining the relevance and validity of one or other system. As English is the language of the majority Irish tends to come off worse. This experience then may be transferred to the learning of other languages and the learners perception of language as relevant is diminished.

May I illustrate the above point with an actual experience drawn from a class-room, which I call "Learning with Harold". A beginner's class full of enthusiasm and anxious to try out their communicative skills on the young language assistant in the school bombarded him with the usual questions concerning, name, age, address, house, family etc. and flushed with success continued till they had got details of his girlfriend. They were delighted with themselves, having got all this information using their newly acquired language! Now they dared to venture further and to the bewilderment of the language assistant and also the class teacher the next question was: "What do you speak in your country?" "German, of course" was the reply. "What do you speak to your parents?" "German", was the reply again. Not satisfied the class pushed yet further and asked "What do you speak to your

girlfriend?" Again the answer came "German". Silence and mystification followed. Finally Harold asked the class, "Why did you ask that question?" "Well, we learn Irish, French and German in school but we speak English all the time except for those classes and we always speak it at home and with friends."

Recent studies have shown that though people are favourably disposed towards the Irish language, the lack of a real need to use or have the language affects the learners attitude and motivation.

William Littlewood puts his finger on another vulnerable spot when he says "those lessons which are most concerned with the achievement of communication are also the most empty of material about which to communicate: teacher and pupils sit there, so to speak, with a great deal of language to develop, but nothing to language about".

It is a common view among language teachers that they should try to associate the language with situations outside the classroom, with the "real world" of family, holidays, sports, pastimes etc. To do this in an authentic way is difficult, if not nearly impossible at times. The classroom is often regarded as an artificial environment, a limiting factor in the teaching of language as a true vehicle of communication. Yet the classroom in which we operate is part of the real world of the pupil, a real social context in its own right. As long as languages are to be taught in schools then we must see to it, that what might be seen as a limitation, be converted into as asset.

One way of doing this, is the use of the target language for classroom managment. This provides a rich source of communication needs. Care, of course, should be taken that the use is not one-sided. Pupils can learn a great deal about negotiating in a foreign language if the classroom discourse comes from both parties involved. A recent video film of a class of 13/14 years olds in Germany managing their class work in French shown by Prof. Piepho in I.T.E. eminently proved this point. The structures and skills acquired thus transfer easily to other social contexts.

Eric Hawkins draws a very accurate picture of many a foreign language teacher's daily task. "The class arrives for its lesson babbling excitedly in English about the day's doings. The teacher shuts the door on English speech patterns, enclosing the pupils within the 'cultural island' of the language classroom, and for 40 minutes strives like a keen gardener to implant in the recalcitrant soil a few frail seedlings of speech patterns in the foreign language. Just as the seedlings are taking root and standing up for themselves, the bell goes and the class is dismissed into the English language environment.

For the next 24 hours the pupils are swept along by a gale of English, listening to different teachers, reading specialist textbooks, asking for more custard with the lunch-time pudding, surviving amid the play-ground witticisms, shouting on the games field, gossiping on the bus going home, relaxing in front of the 'telly'. Even in bed the English speech patterns shape the weird logic of dreamland.

Next morning the foreign language teacher finds yesterday's tender seedlings of French, German or Spanish lying blighted and flattened by the gale of English. She(he) gently revives and waters them but, just as they reach the condition they were in yesterday, the bell rings again and the gale of English sweeps in to destroy all, or nearly all, the patient gardener's handiwork.

One way of approaching this dilemma and to counteract the isolation of the language class is to introduce into language lessons other areas of school, introducing also the element that is lacking, concrete subject matter. By drawing other subjects on the school curriculum into the language class, one calls upon the reality of the pupil's own experience and the teaching of language has a dual role: to provide the learners with useful knowledge and to engage them in purposeful communication in the foreign language. It ensures a link with reality and foreign language can relate to the outside world indirectly through many subject areas.

Traditionally the language teacher has been expected to teach not only the language structures but also to deal with the literature and cultural background of the target language. Precisely these areas cause the greatest difficulty for young language learners who may not yet have sufficient ease in the target language to offer any input on the material in front of him. Abstract ideas are difficult enough in one's own language and often constitute a real barrier for learners at secondary level.

By turning to subjects such as history, geography, general science, art, sport, one is dealing with subject matter already recognised by the pupil as being necessary if not also relevant to his present programme. It reinforces the positon of languages in the curriculum and the gale may not wreak such damage as described by Eric Hawkins.

Another result of borrowing from subjects normally taught by colleagues, is in the area of definition of aims. Defining the aims in a language programme is often expressed in terms of remote objectives and this does not provide the student with any immediate motivation. Other subject areas have more clearly defined topics or tasks, and pupils can see and measure their progress with the completion of each topic. This pychological encouragement could now

be available in language classes.

Studies of immersion or partial immersion courses have shown that teaching other subjects through the medium of the target language is strongly and positively related to achievement in that language and that performance in the other school subjects does not suffer. This has been documented in reports on Bilingual education in Ontario and we have evidence of the same from schools in non Gaeltacht areas, where subjects are taught through the medium of Irish. Both in Canada and in Ireland the majority of pupils in such immersion programmes do not use the target language at home and yet their mastery of the target language and performance in other subjects is high.

Perhaps the over concentration on language usage in the language class militates against the acquisiton of language. Normal communication operates on a level very different from the way the foreign language learner is required to learn. The language teacher directs the attention of the learner to those features of performance which normal use of language requires him to ignore and so puts the learner at a remove from his own experience and increases the difficulty of the learning task. If subject matter is covered both in the language course and also in the specialist course the learner can recognise that acts of communication, like identification, instruction, description etc., are expressed in the foreign language in one way and in his own language in another. By equating both languages with reference to their use in communication the value of both languages is impressed upon the learner.

I would strongly recommend the idea of teaching other subjects through the target language and have had personal experience that by doing so it raises the pupils' interest in the language, motivates them and strengthens the position of foreign language in schools.

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Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin
Department of Italian
Trinity College Dublin

THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

The purposes of this introductory paper are threefold:

1. To point out some advantages of literature as a subject of study in a foreign language;

2. To suggest some ways in which the teaching of literature might be approached in a creative way, in order to derive the maximum language-learning benefits from it;

3. To raise some general questions for discussion.

Needless to say, very little of this presentation will be original. The more worthwhile ideas come from conversations with Mr Seán Devitt, of the Department of Teacher Education in Trinity College, and from reading Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature, by H.G. Widdowson [Longman, 1975]. Some of the applications, and some of the more dubious notions, are my own.

To argue the central position of creative literature within language would be to risk preaching to the converted, and also to risk repeating an earlier article ["The value of literary translation in language teaching", in Language Across Cultures, edited by Liam MacMathúna and David Singleton, Dublin, IRAAL, 1984, pp. 221-234]. Instead, I will merely draw attention to some special properties of creative writing which give it a particular claim to attention in the language class.

Literature is authentic language, written with unusual care, skill and language awareness. As it aims at creative expression, it must have a strong claim to inclusion in any communicative approach to language. But in order to serve a useful purpose in language learning, the text must be to a certain extent "de-consecrated", placed within a context of general language use, and presented in a way which allows the student to respond actively and autonomously to its creative character. Such "desecration" may be anathema to the more traditional type of literary appreciation.

It goes without saying that literature is useful for teaching culture and civilisation. We need to be equally

clear, however, as to its usefulness for teaching basic elements of language. Grammar, for example: could literary texts help to convey the "feel" of the subjunctive in Italian? Or lexis: it could be argued that literary works present vocabulary in a way which combines the denotation of words with strong emotional connotations. What better than literature to convey the natural rhythms and sounds of a sentence? And if one aims to provide the student with a sense of linguistic registers and an awareness of different levels of appropriacy, what better than comparative examples of dialogue from a novel to convey just that grasp of nuance?

An essential fact of life is that language is really used for dramatic or expressive interpersonal purposes, just as much as for pure description. The creative use of language is not a marginal luxury, but a central aspect of true communicative competence. Moreover, many supposedly non-literary uses of language, which would be recognised as both authentic and everyday, are in fact extremely stylised. For example, the lonelyhearts column and the horoscope feature, both of which are generally recognised as being peculiarly stimulating to the language learner: "NYC GWM, 30, Ivy journalist, Slavic handsomeness, seeks strapping, All-American guy who looks even cuter in glasses, likes Maugham, fried chicken, subtitles and supratitles. Photo please. NYR, Box 00000." "ACQUARIO (21 genn.-18 feb.) Giorno: la mattina dovrebbe trascorrere senza intoppi e contrarietà. Seguite attentamente l'evolversi degli avvenimenti perché nel pomeriggio dovrete intervenire con urgenza. Sera: un incontro sentimentale interessante." Such sybilline utterances demand an almost literary response.

There is even a close analogy between interpreting literature and interpreting conversation, as the listener is compelled to extract a factual and personal meaning from often seemingly incoherent fragments. "Literary" skills, then, are widely used in everyday language situations.

Sophisticated literary techniques are also used in such a pervasive medium as radio advertising. Among current Irish radio advertisements, one may perhaps disregard the crude transposition from adverb to adjective in "Think first, think First National", or crass phonetic/graphic reinforcement in "Of course there's a Corsa for you!". More subtle, however, is the separation of spelling from sound in the refrain "New Nissan Sentra: You Need This Car", where the phonetic similarity of the product and the suggested need are partially concealed from the conscious mind. Still more subtle is the deliberate use of the propensity to spell out and "read" what we hear, in another motor advertisement which sings: "Have a Mitsubishi day! Drive your cares and blues away...." Here, the link between an Eden-like existence and the

purchase of a Japanese motor-car is insinuated with serpentine subtlety by the inadmissible graphic mirage of being able to drive one's cares as one drives one's car. The strength of the subconscious suggestion is reinforced by the fact that it cannot be considered by the logical and critical faculties, being too absurd for words.

At this point, I want to jump straight from jingles to poetry, from Mitsubishi to Séamus Heaney. The first poem in the collection called Death of a Naturalist [London, Faber, 1966] begins: "Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests; snug as a gun." The poem, "Digging", presents the poet at his window, seeing his father digging a flowerbed, thinking back on previous generations who worked the land, and deciding in the end to "dig" with his pen rather than following those ancestors with a spade. In bald summary, the "message" of this complex and beautiful poem could be summed up in the maxim: "The pen is lighter than the spade". But right from the outset, a second, more traditional and more dangerous association is proposed by the poem's first simile. The snugness of the pen conjures up a more deadly implement: graphically though not logically, "snug" is "guns" backwards. And the pen is traditionally mightier not than the spade but than the sword.

Once this deadly image has been smuggled in, the ambiguity of ancestral links is explored in ways which can actually be grasped by means of one of the simplest and most banal of language exercises: grouping words under predetermined headings. What phrases in "Digging" are about killing? The list would include: gun, drills, rooted out, buried, nicking, slicing, cuts of an edge through living roots...and, of course, the title-word. Guns have led to much digging of graves.

Other simple exercises in word-grouping, easily undertaken in the language class, could uncover further layers of meaning. Parts of the body, for instance: it will be found that the writer himself owns the head, finger and thumb, while his rude forefathers are assigned the straining rump, the coarse boot, the inside knee and shoulder. This division of parts reinforces the evolutionary thrust of the poem, which is also supported by the historic transition from bog to potato field to garden, discovered by listing kinds of land worked in the poem. Listing sounds, one finds the poet, coming of age, hearing "a clean, rasping sound" from his father in the flowerbeds, but remembering "the squelch and slap/Of soggy peat." Many of these elements reinforce the central ambiguity of generation: generations succeed each other in a cycle of generation and death, and we are both joined to and cut off from our ancestral roots. The sexual aspect of this fatal cycle is suggested in the phrase "buried the bright edge deep", while the contradictory tensions of ancestral relationship converge on the phrase "the curt

cuts of an edge/through living roots".

These levels of interpretation, including the poem's essential ambiguity, are accessible through simple language activities which could be undertaken in the classroom. Another simple exercise, the recognition and grouping of grammatical categories, might further reinforce our understanding of the poem. For example, a list of the adverbs, in order of appearance, reads: down, low, firmly, deep, sloppily, down, down. And verbs ending in -ing: digging, straining, stooping, digging, loving, nicking, slicing, digging, living.

A more sophisticated level of grammatical analysis might note that the progressive form of the verb needs a separate accompanying indication of tense (was digging, is digging) to provide a time-frame, and that repeated -ing endings suggest a certain timelessness in the repeated activities of the generations. Exactly this kind of analysis, on a poem by Theodore Roethke, is offered by Widdowson [1975, cit.], pages 54-57, 108-115.

But Widdowson's book is particularly impressive in the way that it shows how simple classroom work, skilfully directed, can approach the subtlest meanings of poetry. For example, in exploring the links between seemingly unrelated words, he proposes [pages 104-107] a practical series of steps. "Question 1: Using a dictionary if necessary, note down as many details about the meaning of these words as possible..... Question 2: Which of these terms are linked by (a) having the same details? (b) having details which are related in meaning?" This type of semantic association is then used to evaluate links which might at first sight appear hopelessly enigmatic.

Rather than simply listing words in a certain category, it might sometimes be more creative, and more productive, to knock out those words (adjectives, adverbs, rhyme words, etc.), or to remove the title, or jumble the line order, and ask students to supply the missing elements. Widdowson suggests some of these strategies; others I have heard proposed by David Little and Seán Devitt. Rather timidly, I have gone so far as to conceal a title, but have not dared to try more drastic assaults on the text. To conclude the second portion of this paper, looking at techniques for using literature, I want now to touch briefly on the principle of comparison.

Widdowson [pages 88-103] offers a convincing exposé of how descriptions of literary characters may be analysed by contrast with very different types of description, even a passport application. Similar examples of stylistic variability have been presented in Authentik. The great value of the comparative principle is that it forces the student to consider actively what makes a particular text assume one form and not another.

Thus, a combination of literary and non-literary treatments of a topic can prove doubly illuminating. If the starting-point is a literary work on death, for example, one may set it in a context of other linguistic treatments of that theme. Carducci's stylised poem, "Pianto antico", on the death of his little son, might be placed beside the even more stylised convention of the death notices in an Italian newspaper, with their archaic rhetorical formulae --- "addolorati ne danno il triste annuncio", "affranti dal dolore ne danno l'annuncio", "è venuto a mancare all'affetto dei fratelli" --- if only to show that "unnatural" expressions are regularly used as a narcotic against inexpressible grief. Carducci's letter to a friend, telling him of the death and doubting whether he will ever get over it, might be used as a "way in" to the imagery of seasonal rebirth in the poem --- a fruit-tree reflowering after winter, contrasted with the image of the father as a withered, stricken plant. Or that image of trees and rebirth might be approached by another comparative exercise: setting Carducci's poem beside "The Rose Tree" by W.B. Yeats, where the withered tree stands in need of a blood transfusion from Pearse and Connolly. Irish readers will quickly grasp that Pearse & Connolly was not a firm of market gardeners, and that therefore the rose tree is of political rather than horticultural interest. From this realisation, it is a short step to understand that in Carducci's poem, the "real" as well as the "figurative" tree may also have symbolic meanings which transcend the literal meaning. And this realisation that in poetry all words, whether introduced under the guise of literal description or smuggled in as metaphors, have an equal imaginative footing, is a very valuable lesson for understanding not only literature but also many other persuasive uses of language.

Having touched, then, on the advantages of literature in language work, and on some techniques for activating student involvement with literature, I would like to conclude by raising some questions which language teachers might like to consider in detail:

1. WHAT SORT OF TEXTS SHOULD WE USE?	- short or long texts? - what subject-matter? - complete texts or extracts? - contemporary or older? - what registers? - what sources? - does "quality" matter?
2. WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF EXERCISE?	- (a) for poetry? - (b) for prose?

3. WHAT KINDS OF
   INTRODUCTORY AND
   COMPARATIVE MATERIALS
   SHOULD BE USED?

4. WHAT SPECIFIC ADVANTAGES - (a) from poetry?
   MIGHT ONE EXPECT? - (b) from prose?

5. SHOULD THERE BE A SEPARATE
   "LITERATURE" CLASS? OR
   SHOULD LITERATURE PERMEATE
   THE LANGUAGE CLASS?
   SHOULD THERE BE
   "SET TEXTS"?

A lively discussion took place on these points. On the first question, it was felt that limited language ability among pupils meants that short texts should be preferred. But another participant in the workshop felt that there are two distinct kinds of reading, intensive and extensive. While it makes sense to cover short texts intensively, word by word, students should also be encouraged to read fast through, say, a 120-page novel, one chapter per weekend. This longer work could then be studied in two different ways in class: short extracts could be "pulled apart", word by word, while longer passages could be read fast, for comprehension work. Comprehension exercises might be handled either in the mother tongue or in the target language.

It was suggested that short stylistic readings of a few pages in a novel could be done in class as preparation and motivation for the pupils to continue reading the book extensively, in their own time.

As for subject matter, one practical suggestion was that the topics set for the oral examination should be covered, particularly in works that include authentic dialogue. The students' own interests should also be catered for: not only sport and music, but also personal topics such as emotions and relationships. Subjects such as love need to be treated with some delicacy; and it was also suggested that beginners' classes might need texts to be slightly doctored from the linguistic point of view.

On the question of preparation, it was felt that the subject-matter of the literary work should be introduced first as a general, non-literary topic. In asking students to read ahead in their own time, it is most important to provide them with a list of questions to be answered, so that they read with a purpose and gain a sense of achievement from "sorting out" the text. Even peripheral or badly-chosen questions are infinitely better than leaving them to read without direction.

On the question of which comparative materials might be used, there was disagreement over the desirability of visual images. Producing photographs of things talked about in a poem may make the poem more accessible, but there is also the risk that the students' own perceptions of the images might be excessively predetermined by such aids. More generally, one speaker felt that although the younger generations are geared to visual images, language teachers ought to concentrate more on enhancing verbal awareness.

Particular attention was drawn to the usefulness of plays in stimulating oral work and dialogue. Plays can be used to develop such skills as reading, speaking and memory. They can explore topics which are of interest to students. Some plays may be available on cassette, for listening as well as reading. Video or comic-strip versions may aid comprehension.

On the question of "quality", it was felt that teachers might well decide to choose challenging creative works rather than sticking to bestsellers. "Quality" is not synonymous with elevated diction; one can read good literature without opting for Racine. However, some participants felt that with a language barrier to cross, students might be glad of a more popular, simplistic level of writing than what they are capable of absorbing in the mother tongue.

A mixture of quality, and a mixture of register, was felt to be desirable in choosing literary texts in the target language. In general, participants in the discussion group felt that literature has an important contribution to make to the foreign language classroom.

Brendan Quinn

THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

An effective study of the intercultural dimension in language teaching can only be undertaken when the cultural dimension itself has first been examined. The latter refers to any cultural phenomena in the countries of the target language which can be used to further language learning. In English it is often called a study of a "country's life and institutions", in German "Landeskunde", and in French "civilisation".

The intercultural element arises when comparisons are drawn and judgements are made about the cultural phenomena in one's own country and those prevailing in the countries of the target language. Once the pupil learns of some aspect of life in another country it is almost automatically linked with aspects of life in his/her own country. The intercultural aspect is so inextricably related to the cultural aspect that one can rarely study one without reference to the other. The thrust of this short paper will be more an analysis of the cultural dimension with allusions to the intercultural dimension.

The cultural element is not entirely a new concept in language learning, but it has really only come to the forefront in recent years. In the 1984 Leaving Certificate papers at both higher and ordinary levels in French and German only one item appeared which related directly to life in a French- or German-speaking country. It was an article from the Spiegel magazine concerning difficulties pupils had with their homework in Germany today. The essay titles on the higher level papers were for the most part of a vague, abstract or pseudo-intellectual nature. The 1985 papers were quite different. In the French aural comprehension, for instance, there was a realistic conversation, an interview from the radio, a France Inter road information service bulletin, and a news broadcast. They were in the kind of French the pupil is likely to encounter in a French-speaking country, and furthermore contained the kind of information which would be useful to him/her.

In the written papers in French there were present-day texts. On the higher level paper the pupil was required to write a letter to a French tourist board and on the ordinary level paper he/she was required to write a letter about working in France. Opinions about topical subjects - drunken driving and unemployment - were to be expressed on the higher level paper. On the German papers too newspaper reports appeared. The letter on the higher level paper concerned working in a German-speaking country. The pupil was also required to elaborate on notes concerning cinema advertisements, menus, postal instructions, etc.

We have here a transition from a more abstract and academically oriented language learning (with emphasis on

literature, grammar and essay questions) to a more practical, pupil-related one. The same development is mirrored in textbooks in use. In La Langue des Français (Watson, first published in 1963, 1er livre) there is virtually nothing about life in France. In Salut! (published in 1983) there appear a list and maps of French-speaking countries, notes on a French film star, information about letter-writing, advertisements in French tourist brochures and newspapers, information about trains and school. The cultural dimension has helped us to turn to a more interesting and "real" side of language. The cultural dimension is clearly linked with the communicative approach.

One of the purposes of the cultural element is to make real to the pupils the language they are learning. This knowledge about the country whose language is being acquired can be used to motivate. A pupil who perceives that the language is representative of a real people, who lead real lives, who live in a real country with real (albeit different) institutions, will learn more willingly than a pupil who perceives language learning as something confined to the classroom and exams.

The reason why so many foreigners learn and often speak English so well is none other than a utilitarian one. They realize the effective use of English can lead to their own advancement and gain. The importance of English itself acts as a motivator. By employing the cultural dimension purposefully and stressing the importance of the languages we teach for the pupils' careers we see how the cultural element becomes an important motivator.

The following are some basic aspects which can be covered in the classroom: industry and the economy, newspapers and the media, history, geography, government and political parties, regions, cities, the educational system, food and drink, sport. The depth to which the subject is treated depends on the age of the pupils and the standard of the class.

It should be remembered that some or a good deal of the information might already be familiar to the learners. In geography, for instance, many of those learning Spanish would know what a map of Spain with physical features looks like. It requires then just a little on the teacher's part to give an authentic geography lesson on Spain in Spanish. On the basis of a cultural element, knowledge which pupils know already being fused with some new knowledge being imparted by the teacher, communication in the target language can take place.

For advanced classes knowledge of more involved aspects of culture can be provided: dialects, theatre and the arts, folk tales and customs. As the pupils become aware of other aspects of their own culture, so these can be matched with more involved aspects of the other country's culture. It is probably at this stage that the intercultural dimension can be utilized most effectively. With a deeper knowledge of both their own and the other country's life and institutions the pupils should be

induced to compare and evaluate for themselves.

One may consider whether information about a country's culture should be imparted through English or through the actual language being learned. I feel as much as possible should be done through the target language. As all or some of the pupils would already be familiar with at least some of the information the teacher is supplying, it is not necessary that they understand every word or, at times, very much at all for the basic message to be grasped. There are, however, occasions when the use of English might be more expedient.

Another consideration is whether cultural information should flow naturally and spontaneously from class discussion or some incident in the classroom or whether it should be presented in a well-prepared and formal manner. Why not draw from both sources? Both sources complement each other.

Providing a cultural dimension, which is the basis for the intercultural dimension, entails certain consequences for teachers. It means that we as teachers must live in and travel to the countries whose languages we teach to collect authentic material for use in school. How else can we obtain postcards, bus and tram tickets, railway timetables, maps, slides, books, cassettes, etc., which we can show to our pupils to illustrate a particular cultural phenomenon. Above all a genuine knowledge of the people and country can only be attained by living and travelling in the country. Providing the cultural dimension requires a considerable competence on our parts. Without a thorough knowledge of cultural phenomena, we are in no position to promote the intercultural dimension.

The latter lends itself to an extremely important educational aim. The comparing of one's own culture with another can lead to projects and group work. The pupils could acquire this information by writing or going to embassies and cultural institutes. Seeking out and evaluating information is an important learning process in itself.

The cultural dimension adds variety, stimulation and enjoyment to language learning. When this leads to the intercultural dimension and the comparisons involved, the pupils should be induced to see cultural phenomena in various countries as different from one another rather than inferior or superior. The role of the intercultural dimension should be to reduce prejudices and increase flexibility.

A final word. Literature is a part of the cultural dimension. It is a vital expression of any country's culture and values and accordingly should be furthered and encouraged as much as possible within the classroom. But ... let us choose literature to which our pupils can relate.

CONCLUDING FORUM

REPORTS FROM THE LANGUAGE ASSOCIATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Edited by Bebhinn O Meadhra

INTRODUCTION - BEBHINN O MEADHRA, MLTA

The Modern Language Teachers' Association of Ireland, known as the MLTA, is the umbrella organization for the Italian (ATI), French (FTA), German (GDI) and Spanish (STA) Teachers' Associations. Its aims are:

- to promote language learning in Ireland;
- to facilitate mutual support and co-operation between its constituent associations.

The MLTA is run by a committee of eight, two from each constituent association:

ATI	Anne Clark (Treasurer) Cormac O Cuilleanain	FTA	Margaret Byrne Bebhinn O Meadhra (President)
GDI	Brendan Quinn Hertha Stieber (Secretary)	STA	Jacqueline Nelson (vacancy soon to be filled)

The present committee took ofice in 1984-5 and undertook a revamping of MLTA activities so that members could be offered a two-year cycle of major events:

YEAR 1 January: National Modern Languages Convention
May: AGM and public lecture

YEAR 2 January: National Modern Languages Forum
May: AGM and public lecture

(The AGM session may eventually be incorporated into the January events.)

The National Forum is still in the early planning stage. We hope to provide an opportunity for the member associations, Department of Education representatives, curriculum developers, and all bodies concerned with languge teaching in Ireland to meet for a one-day public session to thrash out problems and discuss the burning issues in language teaching. The first such forum is expected to be held in January 1987. This afternoon's closing session should be a small foretaste of the proposed National Forum, as representatives of the four language associations report on their major issues and concerns.

ITALIAN - CORMAC O CUILLEANAIN, ATI

The past few years have been both discouraging and heartening. It has been discouraging to see a drop in the number of pupils taking Italian for the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate: down in the Leaving Certificate from 92 in 1979 to 81 in 1985; down in the Intermediate Certificate from a peak of 203 in 1979 to 99 in 1985. The results obtained, however, have been heartening, and new developments have not caused any problems, ATI members having thrown themselves into the task of retraining for new methods with great enthusiasm.

The major problem has been neglect by officialdom and in the schools. The lack of a specialist inspector for Italian (and Spanish) has been a continuing cause for concern. We desperately need some structure to provide advice, assistance and materials; perhaps a teacher on secondment would help.

I should like here to pay tribute to the immense contribution of Professor Tossi and the Italian Institute in keeping alive the flickering flame of Italian.

The latest language document from the Curriculum and Examinations Board contains a commitment to language diversification and to developing "minority" languages. The plight of so-called "minority" languages was described as "a matter of continuing concern" by the Minister for Education on the occasion of the launching of that document, but this does not seem to mean that anything will be done about it.

Italian suffers neglect also at third level. It is not offered in the NIHEs (whether in European Studies or in Marketing). The official attitude towards Italian in this country is tantamount to the racist attitude towards southern Europeans in Fawlty Towers. For every 300 pupils taking French, one pupil takes Italian. Italian is doing quite well in the universities, but by not studying it in the schools we are being deprived of a vital part of our European identity.

The interest, enthusiasm and commitment of teachers of Italian is second to none when it comes to developing new materials; and the expansion into other languages, including Italian, of Authentik under Sean Devitt's tutelage has been one of the most stimulating and beneficial advances in recent times.

SPANISH - JACQUELINE NELSON, STA

The situation in Spanish is akin to that of Italian. Despite the accession of Spain to the EEC in 1986 there has been no boom for Spanish. The numbers taking Spanish in the Leaving Certificate have dropped from 9% in 1974 to 2.07% in 1985. This can in no way be the fault of the very dedicated and enthusiastic teachers.

There is a multiplicity of reasons for the decline, including

- bad exam results in the 1970s;
- no inspector for Spanish;
- pressure from other areas of the curriculum (e.g. Trinity College required only 1 science subject for medicine a few years ago, but now 2 are required; this tends to squeeze out modern languages).

The way forward would appear to lie in diversification of the language curriculum.

The Minister for Education has paid lip service to the furthering of Spanish, but very little is being done. The irony is that knowing Spanish is becoming increasingly important. For example, a letter from the EEC Commission comments that at the moment in Europe there is a glut of people with skills in French, German and English, and that what is required is other languages, particularly Spanish, which might be useful both in Europe and world-wide. To put that in an Irish context, it is frustrating to hear Tom Doyle from the Language Centre of Ireland remarking that last year he had ten vacancies, some in Dublin and some in Spain, for people with secretarial skills combined with Spanish, and he was unable to fill even one.

Mr Ritchie Ryan has stressed that Spain and South America are potentially among our most important markets. But if we want to sell to them we must speak Spanish. Within the next ten years, one of the main outlets for engineers will be South America, but our engineers will not have the language necessary to take up these opportunities.

The teachers have mounted a three-pronged campaign on behalf of Spanish, aimed at school managers, parents and third-level institutions: people must be made aware that French is no longer the all-important foreign language. The non-university third-level institutions do not recognize Spanish as an entry qualification. It is, however, pleasing to note that NIHE Dublin has included Spanish in its marketing course.

GERMAN - HERTHA STIEBER, GDI

First the good news. The enthusiasm of the teachers has never been higher. They welcome: the appointment of Mary Varilly as German inspector; the fact that many students have found German an asset; and the opening of the Youth Exchange Bureau. In spite of anxieties about implementing the new syllabus, teachers are on the whole enthusiastic about the possibilities if offers, as shown by their higher than normal attendance at recent seminars.

Now for the bad news. The numbers taking German at Leaving Certificate are still totally disproportionate compared to French: about 1,700 taking German and 28,000 taking French, a proportion of approximately 1:17. All four languages are promoted equally by the MLTA: the committee has two members from each language and we hope by gatherings like this to foster understanding between the teachers of the different languages. AUTHENTIK also promotes all languages equally. Much more sweeping measures by the Department of Education are necessary. Perhaps more part-time teachers could be used, or some schools in certain areas might be designated minority-language schools (for example, German in an area where there are many German factories). There is an urgent need to act before so-called minority languages disappear from the schools.

FRENCH - DAVID PARRIS, FTA

I feel cast in the role of the Big Bad Wolf. People are, of course, frustrated by a deplorable situation, reflected in these 1982-3 statistics:

Language Teaching at Second Level in Ireland

Languages offered	French	German	Spanish	Italian
% of schools (out of 805) offering each language in junior cycle	96%	21%	11%	1.25%
% of pupils (out of 205,317) taking each language to Inter. Cert. level	71.3%	6.2%	3.1%	0.2%
% of schools (out of 775) offering each language in senior cycle	94%	21%	15%	2%
% of pupils (out of 96,024) taking each language to Leaving Cert. level	61.2%	3.3%	2.5%	0.2%

At their 932nd meeting the European ministers of education resolved as follows:

> One modern language in addition to the mother tongue should be studied in depth, and the learning of other languages should be encouraged. At least one of the languages taught

should be an official language of the European Communities. The member states agree to promote all appropriate measures to enable the maximum number of pupils to acquire, before the end of compulsory education, a practical knowledge of two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

What have these appropriate steps been?

In view of the EEC request that all member states make compulsory the teaching of at least one foreign community language, it seems that though French has a preponderant position among the foreign languages of the curriculum, the other languages should not look on French as taking from them. Rather, they should be encouraged to make up ground in areas where no languages are taught: we should promote all languages and not do down fellow language enthusiasts. In any case, the curricula of other countries often have a similar foreign language profile to Ireland's, with one predominant foreign language, e.g. English in France and Germany. At the same time, other important languages, e.g. Russian, do not figure at all in our curriculum.

There are several reasons for the strength of French in Ireland:

- France is the nearest foreign-language country;
- French was once spoken in Ireland;
- French has long been in symbiosis with English.

Nevertheless, French should not be thought of as doing stunningly well, especially since in world terms English is triumphant. It is an insistence on the value of a multilingual culture that will really strengthen the position not just of the so-called minority languages but of all languages, by putting their study on a much firmer intellectual basis.

COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

- The point was made that the use of part-time teachers might help German in the short term. But it would surely have a negative effect in the long term, for potential teachers would be reluctant to specialize in German at third level if they thought it would lead only to part-time work.
- The "recyclying" of French teachers might be one way of beginning to reverse the dominance of French.
- It might be possible for pupils to receive a grounding in one of the "minority" languages in the new transition year.
- Many teachers who now specialize in French began as teachers of French and some other language.

- More hours are spent teaching French pupils English than we spend teaching our pupils French.

CONCLUDING REMARKS - DAVID LITTLE

Since the First National Modern Languages Convention four years ago there have been several notable changes for the better in second level language teaching in Ireland. A much-needed inspector has been appointed for German, which has provided a great boost to teachers' morale; new syllabuses have been introduced at both Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels; and listening and oral tests have been introduced at Leaving Certificate level. I should like to pay tribute to the Department of Education inspectors for French and German, who have displayed great imagination and unstinting energy in implementing the new syllabuses and examinations.

From what has been said today, it seems that two fundamental problems remain. We urgently need specialist inspectors for Spanish and Italian before these two languages lose further ground; and the four foreign languages that we have need to be more firmly entrenched in the core curriculum. Perhaps the next task of those concerned with the future of foreign languages in our schools should be to explore means of dividing up the foreign language share of the curriculum in different and perhaps revolutionary ways.

CONCLUDING REMARKS - BEBHINN O MEADHRA

On behalf of the convention organizers I should like to thank the Italian Institute for generous financial assistance. Thanks are also due to CLCS, my colleagues on the MLTA committee, speakers, and participants, all of whom contributed to the success of this Second National Modern Languages Convention.